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London Yearly Meeting during 250 Years

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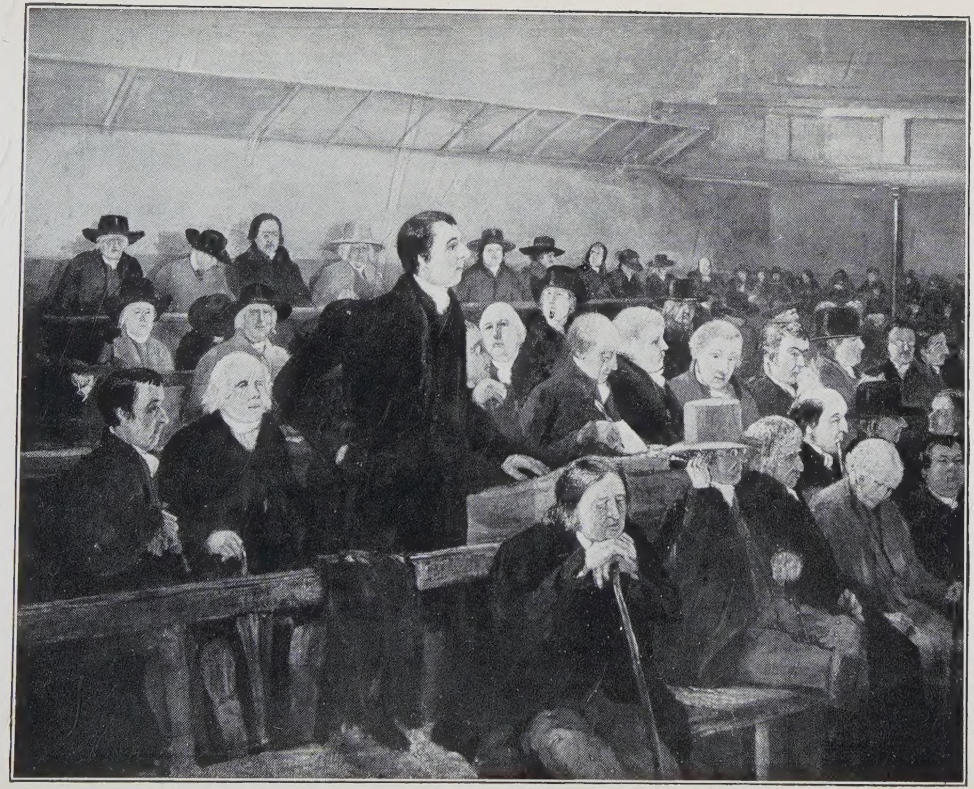
LONDON YEARLY MEETING

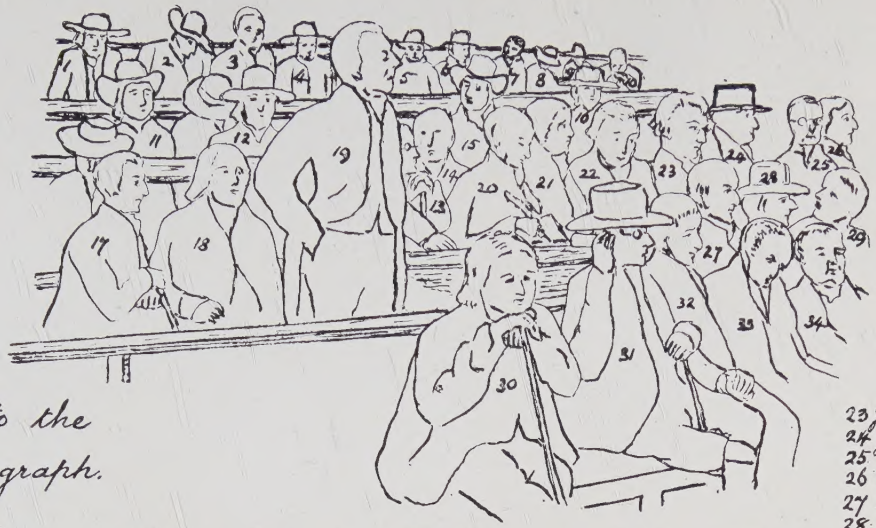
"Conducting the business of the Yearly Meeting is somewhat like the stearing of a vessel by a compass, the finger of which, by the power of a magnet, always points one way; but by the tossing of the waves and from adverse winds, the finger becomes a little shaken, and sometimes occasions a trifling variation, which requires a time of calm before it regains its right centre. So, in conducting the business of the Meeting, when the sure Guide is not watchfully attended to, it produces a little disorder, aud obstructs progress in the right way, until a quiet settlement is again obtained, under the direction of the sure Pilot."

RICHARD JORDAN, of North Carolina, at the Yearly Meeting of 1802, reported by Richard Cockin.



LONDON YEARLY MEETING ABOUT 1840

Photograph of a painting of a sitting of the London Yearly Meeting of Friends Painted by Samuel Lucas of Hitchin about 1840



Key to the Photograph.

1 William Sewell
2 Gawen Ball
3 Samuel Randell
4 Thomas Shillitoe
5 Daniel Wheeler
6 William Rickman
7 Solomon Chapman
8 Peter Bedford
9 Joseph Neatby
10 Richard Barrett
11 George Jones
12 Richard Cocken
13 Joseph J. Price
14 Jonathan Backhouse
15 William Gundry
16 Jonathan Hutchinson
17 Samuel Tuke
18 William Allen
19 Josiah Forster
20 George Stacy
21 Samuel Gurney
22 William Forster
23 Joseph John Gurney
24 Joseph Marriage
25 John Foster
26 Edward Smith
27 Silvanus Fox
28 Samuel Allen
29 Luke Howard
30 Robert Rudden
31 Rawlinson Barclay
32 Robert Alsop
33 William Jones
34 Isaac Bass

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LONDON YEARLY MEETING DURING 250 YEARS

LONDON:
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
DEVONSHIRE HOUSE, 136, BISHOPSGATE, E.C.2
1919

PREFACE

A MEETING in celebration of the two hundred and fiftieth consecutive session of London Yearly Meeting of the religious Society of Friends was held at the head-quarters of the Society, Devonshire House, Bishopsgate, London, on the first evening of the Yearly Meeting of 1918 (Wednesday, 22nd of May). Robert Henry Marsh presided, and about one thousand Friends and others were present. The papers read on that occasion, with much additional matter, are here printed under the care of the Society's Library and Printing Committee.

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LONDON YEARLY MEETING—
About 1840 *Frontispiece*

This picture was painted by Samuel Lucas (1805-1870), of Hitchin, from memory without note or sketch. It does not represent any one sitting, for Thomas Shillitoe was not living in any of the years of the clerkship of George Stacey.

Reproduced, by permission, from the original in the gallery of the Friends' Institute, London.

THE QUAKERS' SYNOD *To face p.* 22

For a description of this illustration, see page 22.

Reproduced from a plate in *The Pilgrim's Progress from Quakerism to Christianity*, 1698, by Francis Bugg (1640-1727).

LONDON YEARLY MEETING during the clerkship (1832–1837) of Samuel Tuke before the death (1836) of Thomas Shillitoe. *To face p.* 72

Reproduced (by permission of Henry Gurney) from a photograph of a sketch by William Henry Leatham (1815-1889).

THE YARD, DEVONSHIRE HOUSE
To face p. 113

Reproduced, by permission, from *Yearly Meeting, 1860*, original pen and ink sketches by John Joseph Willson (1836-1903), of Leeds, published in 1906.

The two Friends in the foreground are the brothers Charles and William Bratt, notable figures in their ancient costume.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

I THINK that what will occur to everyone in attending this anniversary of the two hundred and fiftieth consecutive Yearly Meeting—the thought that will be in everyone's mind—is the loss we have suffered since we met here last year in the death of Isaac Sharp. Naturally, he would have filled the place of Chairman this evening. Of his work for the Society he could not have spoken, though we should all have known it, but his full knowledge of the history of the Society would have come out in the address that he would have given us, and in all that we do this evening the thought of him will, I am sure, be present with us.

Meeting as we do on a sweltering May evening, we must not imagine that the first of the two hundred and fifty meetings we are commemorating was a similar occasion. Quite the contrary. The Yearly Meeting took place "about the period called Christmas," and the following quotation comes from the epistle issued by that Yearly Meeting in 1668-1669:

> We did conclude among ourselves to settle a meeting, to see one another's faces, and open our hearts one to another in the Truth of God once a year, as formerly it used to be.[1]

[1] Many of the quotations from original documents have been modernised as to spelling and punctuation.

The Meeting met before Christmas in 1668 and sat into 1669, so that the meeting was held in 1668 and 1669, and the next meeting was held in 1670. As I say, it was far from being a warm time; Samuel Pepys in his *Diary* notes of this Christmas Eve:

> It being now very cold, and in hopes of a frost, I begin this night to put on a waist-coat, it being the first winter in my whole memory that ever I staid till this day before I did so.

You will remember it was about two-and-a-half years after the Fire of London; St. Paul's had been burnt and so had the meeting-house at the Bull and Mouth near it. Some rooms in "a deserted mansion," as it is called, "of the Earls of Devonshire in Bishopsgate" had been hired, and there is little doubt that the Yearly Meeting in 1668-1669 was largely held close to the premises we are occupying to-day. One wonders how far—I expect fairly largely—the City was getting rebuilt, though only one church had been rebuilt—St. Dunstan's in the East—by the time this Yearly Meeting assembled. Bishopsgate City gate was locked every night; I doubt whether Friends got locked out, as in the country I expect their movements were fairly early. At that time tea was 60s. a pound, and wa drunk mainly in the South of England; George Fox's tea-pot, which can be seen in the adjoining room, was no doubt used by him when he was in the South of England in the later days of his life. One cannot imagine that tea at 60s. was largely drunk by Friends, the usual drink at that time

was beer, and we are assured that its average consumption by the middle class was three quarts per person, per day. For particulars of the history of the Yearly Meeting we always turn to Norman Penney, but I do not father this detail upon him!

Friends must remember this: you are only going to have a taste of the good things to come. The speakers are going to be limited to twenty minutes each, and will only get in one quarter of what they want to say. We shall have a special volume issued giving what they would have said—if they had had a chance—in full, and, therefore, Friends must leave off with an appetite—I am sure they will do so.

You may be interested to know where the Yearly Meeting was held:

In 1668 it was probably here, on the old Devonshire House premises.

In 1677 it was at the Bull and Mouth, which had been rebuilt.

In 1678 it met at three places: at Horsly-down, at the Savoy, and at the Bull and Mouth.

The last time it met at the Bull and Mouth was in 1692.

In 1691 it met at Devonshire House, and 1693-1793 at Gracechurch Street.

From 1794 till now, on these premises, except, of course, the meetings at Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester, which you all remember.

Our present clerk, John Henry Barlow, is the eighty-second who has held office in the Yearly

Meeting. They used them up more rapidly in old times than they do now. When he and I were at school at Kendal, forty-eight years ago, the seventy-sixth was in office, so that only five have come and gone in the forty-eight years.

First of all the Recording Clerk was also the clerk of the Yearly Meeting. I say it in fear and trembling, but it looks as if the Yearly Meeting struck after a time, because there is an amusing minute here, in 1704 :

> The meeting considering that it is necessary that this meeting should have a Clerk belonging to it of the nomination of this meeting, doth now nominate John Field to be the Clerk of the meeting for this year, and doth agree that for the future the Yearly Meeting shall every year nominate and choose the Clerk for that year, according as they shall see occasion.

In 1706 they decreed that

> from henceforward, no one person shall serve in that place two years successively ; and that no new choice of a new Clerk for the future shall be deemed or taken to be a reflection upon the former Clerk.

They went on, I hope, fairly peacefully, until 1733, but I have my doubts, because from that year they chose a clerk so as to " prevent debates," and the method was an extraordinary one. One has heard of the winds from the four quarters, the East, the West, the North, and the South, but to these " quarters " the Friends added a fifth,

"the Midland." Each year the clerkship was to go in rotation, the North one year, the South the second year, the East the third year, the West the fourth year, and the Midland the fifth, and so it is that you have an interesting list; the same names occurring again and again, as you will see in the published report.

But there was an end of that even, because in 1807 it was decided that

> all the representatives shall meet at the close of the first sitting of the Meeting in each year, and shall when so met nominate from among themselves a clerk for the current year.

In passing, one may refer to the bridging of the two hundred and fifty years that we are looking back upon; I think that probably our friend, Lucy Rickman Penney, of Brighton, takes us back further than anyone else. She attended the Yearly Meeting of 1836, eighty-two years ago, when she was Lucy Rickman Lucas. Alfred Tuke Alexander has attended every Yearly Meeting since 1864, except the year he attended Canada Yearly Meeting; William Frederic Wells has attended every Yearly Meeting since 1870. That year Josiah Forster[1] was present for the last time; he was born in 1782 and probably attended

[1] Josiah Forster (1782–1870) was among the last of the great men of the Yearly Meeting—a very frequent speaker, and one who largely influenced the decisions at which the Meeting arrived. In the picture of Yearly Meeting 1840, he is seen addressing the Meeting with one hand on the clerk's desk. In *Quakerieties for 1838*, by Jeremiah Bigg, he is styled the "Knight of the Yearly Epistle." He was clerk of the Meeting 1820–1831. Accounts of his active participation in the business of the last Yearly Meeting he attended may be read in the reports of Yearly Meeting 1870, by Harrison Penney, of Darlington, Sarah Eliza Dymond, of Wilmslow, and others.—Ed.

before the close of the eighteenth century. Josiah Forster must have sat with Friends who had met in 1740, who, in their turn sat with George Fox. I believe William Frederic Wells will have completed forty-nine years of door-keeping this year; Isaac Sharp would have had something to say about the debt the Society owes him for the work he has put in during these forty-nine years, not only in door-keeping but in other ways. I ventured to say recently, in another connection, that William Frederic Wells was "not only an individual but an institution." This is certainly very true, and the more one knows of his work the more one realises the indebtedness of the whole Society to him.

I won't take up your time much longer. We often speak of the "good old times," and it is interesting to see what a Quaker poet had to say, not about this meeting-house, but about the old meeting-house at Gracechurch Street. John Scott of Amwell (1730–1783), the Quaker poet, a friend of Dr. Johnson, writing in 1774, the last year of that particular meeting-house, says :

> Of all the places wherein I have suffered injury from that pernicious heat produced bv a crowd of human bodies, the very worst is the Meeting-house of the people called Quakers, in White-hart-court, Grace-church-street [London]. The situation of this building is the most improper imaginable ; it is almost surrounded with high houses which preclude the access of fresh air. . . . The construction of it is yet worse ;

its dimensions are so small that many of the assembly are almost always indecently kept standing, or, by changing places, occasion a perpetual interruption; and a double projection of wide galleries, and the flat part of the roof, confine the air in a most disagreeable manner. During the time of the national Yearly Meeting, the doors of this meeting are constantly, and the windows mostly, kept shut; and as the season is usually warm, and the meetings are continued day after day without intermission, it at length resembles a heated oven. An ingenious physician whose curiosity induced him to ascertain the difference between the air of this room and that of the adjacent streets, found it no less than seventeen degrees of an accurate thermometer. . . .

I cannot say the subject greatly concerns me as an individual, for I, for the most part, absent myself from these meetings, but I have often felt pain for others, who may not be aware of the danger, or who, being aware of danger, may, notwithstanding, esteem their attendance indispensable. That such attendance has sometimes produced illness is well known; and that it has produced it often there is just cause to believe.[1]

The windows are as well open as they can be, to-night, and I think if John Scott could be here, he would think some improvement had been made on the condition of the old meeting-house that he condemned so freely.

[1] Letter in *The Monthly Ledger*, vol. i. p. 589; see vol. ii. p. 215.

The division for to-night of the survey of the two hundred and fifty years has been made as follows :

William Charles Braithwaite deals with the years 1668 to 1725.

Mary Jane Godlee speaks on the Women's Yearly Meeting.

A. Neave Brayshaw continues the history of the Yearly Meeting from 1725 to 1825.

Edward Grubb brings us to date from 1825.

FIRST PERIOD
1668 TO 1725

TWO hundred and fifty years ago, at Christmas 1668, a meeting of Friends in the ministry was held in London, which

> did conclude among ourselves to settle a meeting, to see one another's faces, and open our hearts one to another in the Truth of God, once a year, as formerly it used to be.[1]

From this time an annual meeting has always been held; and has proved one of the main influences in binding together the Society of Friends, and carrying it forward to new places of vision and fresh service for the Kingdom of God.

The Quaker movement sprang into life some sixteen years earlier in the North of England, when the inward experience of a living Christ which had been won by George Fox, then a young man of twenty-eight, became the glad possession of companies of Seekers in Yorkshire and Westmorland. By the end of 1655, the ardent Quaker Publishers of Truth had spread their

[1] BARCLAY, *Letters of Early Friends*, 1841, p. 325.

evangel through the length and breadth of England, from Berwick to Dover, and from Norwich to the Land's End. It was natural that these Friends, on whom the leadership of the great campaign rested, should seek for times of united conference and stimulating fellowship, and a series of four annual meetings of ministers took place—at John Crook's, in May 1658, in London in the following April, at Warmsworth, near Doncaster, a year later, and in London in May 1661.[1] Meanwhile, an organisation of business meetings was growing up; and, in the Restoration year, three days after the Warmsworth meeting of ministers, a representative meeting "of men Friends out of many counties concerning the affairs of the Church" was held at Skipton in Yorkshire.[2] The spirit of this earliest representative meeting of the whole movement touches a high-water mark of missionary zeal never since reached; and the fine sentence in the epistle then issued still rings as a challenging ideal to the Church:

> Every one to the ministry yourselves, which is the Seed, Christ; for England is as a family of prophets, which must spread over all nations; as a garden of plants, and the place where the pearl is found which must enrich all nations with the heavenly treasure, out of which shall the waters of life flow, and water all the thirsty ground; and out of which nation and dominion must go the spiritually-weaponed and armed men to fight and conquer all nations, and

[1] Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 1912, pp. 333-338.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 335-337.

> bring them to the nation of God, that the Lord may be known to be the living God of nations, and His Son to reign and His people [to be] one.[1]

Then came years of bitter persecution and grave internal strain, of leaders caged in prison or snatched away in their prime, and Quaker groups perforce shut in on themselves; and Fox, released from Scarborough Castle, in 1666, had to face the task of rebuilding the desolated Church.

He devoted himself to the consolidation of Quakerism and the development of a strong corporate consciousness by the establishment of Monthly Meetings, grouped together by county Quarterly Meetings, and, a little later, by promoting the formation of women's meetings. He believed that "the least member in the Church hath an office and is serviceable, and every member hath need one of another."[2] His object throughout was to reinforce the leadership of the Publishers of Truth by calling out the gifts of government which lay dormant in the Quaker community. The sense of corporate unity which resulted turned the Quaker movement into the Society of Friends.

The central organisation came after the setting up of Monthly Meetings and only developed gradually. The Yearly Meeting was not settled on its representative basis till ten years after the meeting in 1668 that we are now commemorating, and meanwhile two other important central bodies had sprung up independently, the Morning

[1] *Epistles from the Yearly Meeting*, 1681–1857, vol. i. p. xxxv.

[2] Fox, *Epistles*, 1698, p. 290.

Meeting of Ministers, begun in 1673, and meeting every week for supervising books and distributing Ministers to the London meetings; and the Meeting for Sufferings, established in June 1676, as a standing vigilance committee of the Society, which also met weekly, and through the method of having London Friends who acted as correspondents for the several counties, became sufficiently representative of the whole country to develop into the Executive Committee of the Society. The Yearly Meeting, as finally settled in 1678, was in fact superadded to an existing organisation.

We may now sketch these first ten years of growth. The annual meeting set up, at Christmas 1668, was a Yearly Meeting of Ministers. This first meeting sat into the year 1669, and arranged to meet again at Easter 1670, when John Burnyeat speaks of attending it.[1] It met again in June 1671; and in the following year, in addition to the Meeting of Ministers, there was a General Meeting of Friends, which decided to form a central body of men Friends, by representation from the counties, which should meet annually in London in Whitsun-week "to advise about the managing of the public affairs of Friends throughout the nation." Ministering Friends were entitled to be present, but no others, except the representatives, without special leave. Each county was to send two Friends, besides six from the City of London, three from Bristol, and two from Colchester, an interesting indication of the strength of Quakerism in these places. A representative meeting was accordingly held

[1] Burnyeat, *Works*, 1691, p. 38.

in 1673, but decided that, while the Yearly Meeting of Ministers was to continue, the representative meeting should be laid down, "till Friends, in God's wisdom, shall see a further occasion."

During the next four years the Meeting was one of Ministers only, but in 1677 it set up the representative meeting again on the basis agreed to five years before; and this met in 1678, and continued year by year, side by side with the Meeting of Ministers. A minute was sent down to the counties, asking that the representatives should bring with them the total of the sufferings, and adding:

> Whatsoever else you desire information or assistance in, let it be written and subscribed by some of your meeting in the name of the rest, the end of this meeting not being limited to the case of sufferings, but intended for the more general service of the Truth and body of Friends in all those things wherein we may be capable to serve one another in love.

The functions of the Meeting, it will be seen, were advisory in character, rather than delegated to it by the Quarterly Meetings, though a body of this importance naturally soon became a strong controlling influence. Its higher value lay in training and consolidating the Society. To bring together from all parts of the country the men of most weight in the movement, for conference and fellowship and the rekindling of vision, was a true way of developing a corporate life which should carry forward the Society in

one common service. A central Church meeting of this character was something of a novelty in those days, and, after the Toleration Act, when Friends could no longer be kept under by persecution, alarmed nervous authorities and became the target for much adverse criticism. In 1699, a Norfolk petition of Justices and Grand Jurors to the House of Commons[1] took notice of the "great growth and daily increase of the Quakers, and the mischiefs and dangers from thence threatening the nation."

> 'Tis observable [say the petitioners] with what restless zeal their deluding teachers and, as we suspect, many Romish emissaries, under their disguise, ramble into all parts of these kingdoms, and boldly spread their venomous doctrines everywhere, attempting to infect and shake the minds of weak Protestants, and assuming rules of discipline, powers in matters of religion and forms of government, repugnant to the established laws of this kingdom, contrary to the very Acts of Toleration, and not allowed to any other Dissenters; vouching all their actions by Divine inspiration for their warrant, and the indulgence of the Government for their indemnity.

A year earlier, the inveterate opposer, Francis Bugg, had adorned his *Pilgrim's Progress from Quakerism to Christianity* with a plate of "The Quakers Synod." This shows a meeting of some eighty Friends, all wearing their low broad-brimmed hats, except the President, George

[1] George Whitehead, *Christian Progress*, 1725, p. 675.

The QUAKERS SYNOD.
Call over y List, Are none of Truths enemies here
G Whitehead
are the doors shut
W Bingly
yea the doors are lockt
W: Penn
B Bealing Scribe
deputies
deputies
deputies

Whitehead, gathered about a large cloth-covered table, on which lie "The Journal of G. Fox," and an open volume of "Church Canons." At one end sits the "scribe," Benjamin Bealing, whom we should now style the "Recording Clerk," and in the gallery above the table are five Friends, Whitehead in the middle, with William Penn on his right, and William Bingley, a leading London Minister, at the end seat on the left. Penn is saying: "Call over the list: are none of Truth's enemies here?" Whitehead asks: "Are the doors shut?" and Bingley replies: "Yea, the doors are locked."

The minutes and epistles of the Yearly Meeting, including some of the Yearly Meeting of Ministers, furnished the materials for the MS. "Book of Extracts," which began to be made early in the eighteenth century, but was digested under alphabetical heads in 1738, and took the form of a printed "Book of Discipline" in 1783.

The nature of the business can be best shown by summarising the proceedings of sample years. I take first 1681, when persecution was very severe in London, and the Meeting only lasted three days, held firstly at Devonshire House and adjourned to the Bull and Mouth, and then to Horslydown. Representatives were present from all the counties except one, and questions arising on the sufferings of Friends occupied most of the time. The accounts were examined, including large sums paid for the redemption of captives in Algiers. Approval was given to the setting up of a Yearly Meeting in Wales, the earliest of the circulating Yearly Meetings

for worship which came to be established in several parts of the country. Accounts were received of the prosperity of Truth in England and also in other nations and in foreign parts, and a committee was appointed to draw up an epistle to the counties, which deals mainly with the decisions arrived at.

In the following year the meeting lasted for five days, and the verbal reports from the counties began to be given in the minutes. The representatives were expected to report the names of Ministers and prisoners who had died and "How the Truth has prospered amongst them since the last Yearly Meeting, and how Friends are in peace and unity." The times were troublous, both through persecution and through the effects of the Wilkinson-Story separation, as is abundantly reflected in the epistle and the reports, but some districts, such as Ireland and Yorkshire, reported many accessions by convincement.

After the Toleration Act, there was evidently for a time a great flocking to meetings and much building of meeting-houses.

In 1694 and 1695 the Yearly Meeting was much occupied with the case of George Keith, the greatest of the Quaker Separatists; and a few years later there was a strong division of opinion in the Society over the form of the affirmation granted to Friends instead of an oath, which led to protracted sessions and heated debates. The Meeting in 1712 lasted eleven days, double the usual time, and that of the following year occupied two weeks. It was not till 1722, after nearly thirty years of controversy, that a form of affirmation was obtained from Parliament which was satisfactory to all Friends.

During these years, Thomas Story contrasts London Yearly Meeting with the Dublin Half-Year's Meeting, where affairs were carried on in "great ease and unity and much sweetness," much to the disadvantage of the former.

> It were happy, and greatly to the benefit and growth of the Church, if the affairs of the Yearly Meeting at London could be so unanimous and peaceable, which could not well be expected till some men are removed, and others regulated, who have crept in unawares under the wings of others, who were never true members of the living body, or ever qualified for the stations they have assumed by the connivance of such as ought to have been more vigilant and kept them at a due distance.[1]

Nevertheless, there is much to admire in the long patience of Friends, which allowed a question that acutely divided them to remain open through the years of heated feeling, until it could be settled with a cool and united judgment in a way easy to all.

We may, indeed, wonder at the ability of the Yearly Meeting to guide the Society with success through the bewilderments and perils of persecution, the storms of controversial attack, the harassing difficulties of internal division, and the precarious days of High Church reaction in the reign of Anne. It showed, it is true, after the Toleration Act, little of that daring spirit of adventure and missionary zeal which had given Quakerism its immense initial energy. It devoted itself overmuch to the needs

[1] *Journal*, 1747, p. 543.

of the Society and too little to the call of the wider Kingdom of God. Its outlook was limited by the level of spiritual life in the Society at the time. But in many things it guided the Church wisely; and gave strength and stimulus to the whole body of Friends.

Its principle of Church government was finely expressed in 1676 by the Yearly Meeting of Ministers, in words which became incorporated in the discipline of the Society:

> The power of God is the authority of the Men's and Women's Meetings and of all the other Meetings. All the faithful men and women in every country, city and nation, whose faith stands in the power of God, the Gospel of Christ, and have received this Gospel and are in the possession of this Gospel, the power of God, they have all right to the power of the meeting, for they be heirs of the power and the authority of the men's and women's meetings.

It was this spiritual fellowship that was the great attraction of the annual meeting and the source of its strength. Business was transacted in an atmosphere of worship; as we see, for example, in the account which Oliver Sansom, of Berkshire, gives, not indeed of London Yearly Meeting, but of the sister Meeting which met half-yearly at Dublin. He tells[1] how the meeting began with four hours of worship; and, in the afternoon, business was to have been taken,

> but the power of the Lord brake forth so mightily among Friends in many testimonies,

[1] *Life*, 1710, p. 237.

> prayers, and praising the Lord that there was no time to enter upon business that day, and so the meeting broke up.

The next morning there was another time of worship for near six hours,

> a precious, heavenly time, and again in the evening the Lord's power mightily appeared, whereby many mouths were opened to declare the goodness of the Lord, and to offer up prayers and praises to Him, which took up the time of that day also, so that very little could be done as touching business.

Business occupied the following two days, and on the First-day two public meetings were held, "which were very large and lasted almost all the day."

In London, there was much opportunity for ministry and worship, and the ministry was often almost continuous, as has happened in more recent times. Thomas Story says in 1717:

> It was a crowding time, there not being for the most part one minute's time between the end of one testimony and the beginning of another, an indecency I have ever disliked.[1]

The stimulus afforded by a Yearly Meeting was very great, especially to young Ministers. John Gratton, of Derbyshire, on his first visit in 1674, "was mighty glad to see such brave meetings," and as he rode away at the close,

[1] *Journal*, 1747, p. 578.

through the fields of merry Islington, he looked on the city, remembering thankfully the good time he had had there.[1] Christopher Story, of Cumberland, attended for the first time in 1679, and says: "A good and glorious meeting it was to me and many more, who were wet plentifully with the dew from heaven."[2] John Banks, also of Cumberland, gives a glowing account of the Meeting of Ministers in 1675:

> I have been made so much a witness of the enjoyment of the power and presence of God among my brethren, that I would not have missed it for all that can be mentioned to me in the world. Oh, the sweet harmony of life that was amongst us, the streams whereof flowed, and many living testimonies were borne to the greatness and sufficiency of the power of God that overshadowed us. What a blessed communion was there held, and how richly was the table of the Lord spread amongst us. It hath not only been to me but to many brethren a day of great joy and spiritual comfort, to the building of us up together in the most holy faith.[3]

On this note of glad fellowship in the Lord I may close; for that fellowship is known still when we go up to our Whitsuntide gathering, and links together, across the span of two hundred and fifty years, the meetings of to-day with those attended by the Friends of long ago.

[1] *Journal*, 1779 edn., pp. 98, 103.
[2] *Life*, 1726, p. 40.
[3] *Journal, sub anno* 1675.

SECOND PERIOD

1725 TO 1825

THE Yearly Meeting of 1725 began its sittings in Whitweek in accordance with a custom which had been observed from the beginning and which was to continue up to and including the year 1789. It is, in the heading to the minutes, called the "General Yearly Meeting," as it had been called in some other years, but this is the last time that the word "General" appears. Inasmuch as the business transacted resembles that of many other years an account of it may be given in some detail.

First of all the names of the representatives from the different counties are set out, each county forming a separate Quarterly Meeting, except Rutland which was joined with Leicestershire, and Shropshire and Monmouth which were included in Wales. Bristol, Colchester, London, and Norwich send their own representatives, Bristol being written in its proper place in alphabetical order, and each of the other three next to the county to which it belonged.[1] After the English counties come North and

[1] Though London and Middlesex sent separate representatives and reports down to 1784, they did not hold separate meetings as did Essex and Colchester, and Norfolk and Norwich.

South Wales (the two having been joined together a few years previously), Ireland, and Scotland. All the counties were represented except Cornwall, the one Friend who is named being "absent by indisposition of body," and against Scotland no name is written. Then follows a list of "Sufferings," for the most part fines and distraints amounting to more than £4,700 for non-payment of church rates and tithes, and on this account one Friend was in prison, two having been discharged in the course of the preceding twelve months. After some minutes relating to finance there came from the different Quarterly Meetings "Accounts of Truth's Prosperity." Most of them state that Friends are kept in love and unity, that care is taken for the relief of the poor and the education of children, some of them making mention of schools within their borders, and that Friends are clear of defrauding the King of any of his customs or dues. In most cases it is reported either that Friends are clear of paying and receiving tithes, or that in this respect there is some unfaithfulness. It is, however, in the accounts which the Meetings give of their own condition that we find cause for disappointment. The joyous note of early years is no more heard. Norwich cautiously says: "We hope that upon the whole we may say Truth rather prospers than loses ground;" Essex makes confession: "We cannot say that there is any addition to the number of Friends, or that virtue and piety increase among us more than heretofore;" Bedfordshire mournfully observes: "As to the prosperity of Truth we wish we could say more, but hope it doth not decline." Berkshire on the other hand can say

that "meetings for worship and discipline are well frequented, and in some parts of our county in a degree better than heretofore." Westmorland is "encouraged to hope Truth prospers;" Lancashire and Yorkshire say that "some are convinced;" London has "reason to believe that Friends do prosper in the Truth," and this appears to be the highest point that is anywhere reached. There are epistles from Amsterdam, the American colonies and Barbados, a report of arrangements for the printing of Friends' books—George Whitehead's journal is to be printed "upon good paper." It is recorded that there has been "great remissness of attendance" on the part of members of the Meeting for Sufferings, and there are reports of decisions in the matter of sundry Appeals. A Friend appealed against Devonshire Quarterly Meeting which had refused to overrule the decision of a Monthly Meeting disowning him for his conduct in a quarrel. The Yearly Meeting, however, decided that inasmuch as the matter had been adjusted between the contending parties, the appellant should be reinstated in membership, and that all documents relating to the matter should "be immediately destroyed and laid waste," so that

> for the future all animosities may be laid aside and that they all study to be quiet and endeavour that peace, unity and concord may be re-established and maintained in the said county.

An Appeal against London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting was unsuccessful; the cause of dispute is not stated. Benjamin Kidd gave

an account, occupying more than two pages in the minute book, of his ministerial journey in America, and some other business was transacted including an alteration in the wording of the Sixth Query. It was decided that in substitution for the words "How doth Truth prosper?" the Query should begin, "How do Friends prosper in the Truth, and doth any convincement appear since last year?" The concluding minute runs:

> This meeting in the general course of its affairs having been held and carried on in a spirit of peace, concord, and brotherly condescension among Friends towards each other, and in this concluding assembly the continuance of the same being witnessed in the renewed sense thereof—adjourns to the usual time next year in this place.

Then follows a list of "publick Friends," *i.e.* ministers, who had died since the preceding Yearly Meeting.

Having thus followed the course of one meeting typical of many others we next turn to some of the outstanding events or decisions in the century under our survey. Three of them are prominent above others, the institution of the office of Elder, the establishment of a definite membership, including membership acquired by birth, and thirdly, the revival of the discipline.

In 1727 the Yearly Meeting passed the following minute:

> A proposition from the Friends of Wilts relating to the extending a care in Friends to young ministers &c. being read, this

> meeting desires all Monthly Meetings to appoint serious, discreet, and judicious Friends who are not ministers tenderly to encourage and help young ministers, and advise others as they shall in the wisdom of God see occasion, and that where there are meetings of ministering Friends such Friends so chosen be admitted as members of such Meetings of Ministers and act therein for the good purposes aforesaid.

Although the word "Elder" does not appear in this minute it is generally considered that here we come upon the beginning of a definitely appointed official Eldership in our Society.[1]

In its Scriptural, non-official sense the name "Elder" (and also "Overseer") is often found in Quaker documents of earlier date, but the modern connotation of "Elder" as distinct, till 1899, from "Minister" is apparent in a minute of 1735, referring definitely to that of 1727, and directing that Elders were to be admitted to the "Morning Meeting of Ministers" and to the "Second Day's Morning Meeting preceding the Yearly Meeting." This latter was probably the survival in its original form of the Meeting of Ministers which, in 1673, was changed in character by the admission of representatives from the different counties.

The late Robert Barclay, of Reigate, who

[1] Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1714 passed a similar minute ordering the appointment of "prudent solid Friends" to sit with the Ministers in their meetings; and in 1740 it was made clear that women also were eligible.

Apart from any official title of "Elder," the subject had been before Friends for a long time. In 1672, an epistle signed by George Whitehead, Alexander Parker, John Story, and seventeen others, was directed, to "our friends and brethren who have a care and oversight committed to you in your several places and meetings" concerning advice to Ministers.

made extensive researches into the history of this time, regarded the appointment of non-preaching Elders as a retrograde step, indicative of the decline that was setting in. To us it is difficult to realise the commanding position in the earliest day of the Meeting of Ministers who deliberately refrained from attending the meetings held for arranging and carrying out the details of financial and other organisations[1] in order that they might the more effectively go forward in their own service.[2] Barclay points out that the Elders, who soon greatly exceeded the Ministers in number, exercised an influence that was repressive rather than encouraging and that their appointment "gradually deprived the ministers of the important positions which they occupied in the early Society" and "gave a prominence to persons who had a talent for secular legislation rather than for gospel labour."[3] For a fuller investigation and discussion of the subject we await the historian of the eighteenth century.

The next constitutional change, the drawing up of a list of members, after the Society had existed for more than eighty years without one, was due to the necessity for ascertaining who were eligible for poor relief. From the beginning Friends have undertaken the care of their poorer members, and seen to the education of their children. It is obvious that this practice

[1] See Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, "the subordination of the business men to the Publishers of Truth," p. 342, and see pp. 320, 322, 326,339, 340.

[2] Compare Acts vi. 2-4.

[3] *Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth*, pp. 522-523 and see succeeding pp. and Index "Elders."

brought in serious difficulties. There were those whose connection with Friends was of the slightest, who, nevertheless, asked for relief of poverty or sickness; and as early as 1659 George Fox, exhorting Friends to be diligent in the care for the poor, found it necessary to warn them against imposters.[1] In 1710 and in 1721 attempts had been made to define the liability of Friends, both by stating who were the persons who were entitled to relief and, in case of their removal, what Meeting was to relieve them. The minute of 1721, laying down the law in negative form, states that all were to be counted as "members" who had not been "denied" by their Monthly Meeting, that is, all those who made profession with Friends against whom no charge of misconduct or disloyalty had been established.[2] It is clear, however, that this did not meet the difficulties that were continually arising; and, finally, in 1737, it was decided that all Friends should be deemed members of the Quarterly, Monthly, or Two-Weeks Meeting within the compass of which they were living on the first day of June 1737, the day on which the meeting that finally came to this decision was being held. Nevertheless, anyone who, within the preceding

[1] A minute of Bristol "Men's Meeting" (5 xi. 1672) states that a man had asked the Meeting to "supply him with some stock to begin his trade again. But Friends not accounting [him] so faithful a Friend as one whom they are obliged to take such care of as to see him supplied" declined to grant his request, but gave him 20s. for the present necessities of his family. Further grants were made on three subsequent occasions.

[2] The often repeated statement that before this time there was no "membership" of the Society of Friends is true only in the sense that no definite list of members was drawn up (careful registers were kept of the births of Friends' children). Except for an indefinite fringe it was perfectly understood who were "Friends" holding definitely the principles of the Society. Against those who violated any of these principles the Monthly Meetings issued "testimonies," often public testimonies, from early times.

twelve months, had received poor relief was to remain a member of the Meeting which had relieved him even though he had removed from it. Any Friend moving from one Monthly Meeting to another was to apply to the Meeting to which he belonged for a " certificate or other usual recommendation," and this was not to be granted if he were insolvent or, within the previous three years, had received poor relief from the Meeting out of which he proposed to move. But if, after having been accepted by his new Meeting, he should, within three years, " ask and receive any relief . . . . not having [in that time] contributed to or been employed in any service of the Church," then his membership was to revert to the Meeting from which he had come so that it should be responsible for him. To this was added a clause which, not unnaturally, gave rise to disputes. If the Meeting in which the Friend was living relieved his necessities, it might charge that from which he had come with the money that had been spent on his behalf. It was moreover provided that " single men and women servants, being hired one year and honestly serving the same in one family," and any who having been bound apprentice had lived forty days with a master or mistress, should become members of the Monthly Meeting within whose compass they were residing ; and that membership of wife and children should follow that of the husband or father.

It was this minute that finally established the system of Birthright Membership as we know it to-day. Some of its clauses called for interpretation; for example, the question was raised whether a Friend who had been a representative

from one Meeting to another could be said to have been employed in the service of the Church, and it was decided that he had been so employed; but at another time it was held that a recommendation by an "agent" to Ackworth School did not confer membership on the children who were recommended. Other technical points arose from time to time. But the most serious disputes arose between Monthly Meetings when one of them had relieved the necessities of a Friend and charged the money expended to a Meeting in which he had formerly lived. These disputes stirred up strife and bitterness incompatible with that Christian charity which, as between recipient and giver, so far from being a cause of division, ought to include both in a bond of love. In order to avoid these difficulties the Meeting for Sufferings in 1817 put forth a scheme which might be "consistent with those brotherly feelings which ought always to distinguish us as members of one great family." The proposal was that a general fund should be raised for the poor, the administration of relief remaining under the care of the Monthly Meetings. To a central committee the several Quarterly Meetings were to report the amounts collected and dispersed by them on this account, paying to this fund a surplus if they had one, or receiving from it any deficiency which they had incurred. The Yearly Meeting of 1819 declined to adopt the proposal.

As the years went on it became mournfully evident that the life of the Society was dying down and its numbers were growing smaller. Reports from Quarterly Meetings show little

variation in their statement that there are few or no "convincements," and there is confession of unfaithfulness to the principles for which the Society stood. In the year 1760 the Meeting seriously faced the situation. John Griffith[1] in his *Journal* relates that after the reports from the Quarterly Meetings had been read showing

> great slackness and unfaithfulness in divers places . . . . . the sense whereof deeply affected some minds, a Friend [probably the writer] stood up [and said]: "that now it behoved that meeting deeply and weightily to consider what remained to be done for the help and recovery of the Society to its ancient purity and comely order."

Friends were asked to offer themselves for the service of visiting Meetings throughout the country and, before the Yearly Meeting ended, fifty-eight of them came forward.[2] The country was divided into six sections which were systematically visited, and the visitors made ample reports of their findings. John Griffith also in his *Journal* devotes many pages to the story of his service in company with others. Some extracts from the reports themselves and a summary of others will give us a picture of the work that was done and of the need for it. Of the counties of Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby, and Leicester the visitors say:

> We found a sensible truly concerned remnant who sincerely laboured for the

[1] John Griffith (1713-1776), a native of Wales, lived in early life in Pennsylvania, whence he came to England on a religious visit, and after travelling widely for a number of years he settled at Chelmsford.

[2] All men, as women did not then form part of the Yearly Meeting.

> prosperity of Truth, and in divers places a tender spirited, hopeful youth appeared which administered satisfaction and comfortable hopes of reviving in the Lord's time, yet very mournful was the declension found by us in these counties, occasioned chiefly, as we apprehend, by the cares of this world and the inordinate love of transitory things choking the good seed of the kingdom.

All this was manifest in poor attendance at worship even on First-days, and at meetings for business, and in the dropping of week-day meetings altogether. There was

> little labour bestowed for the reclaiming disorderly walkers, no Overseers nor Elders of either sex appointed in Lincolnshire, nor were women's meetings sufficiently encouraged there. The same, though not so general, in the other counties. Divers appeared unfaithful in many places in our testimony against tithes, &c., and some concerned in hiring substitutes to serve in the militia, neither were all clear of a conformity to the vain and superstitious customs of illuminating their windows on those called rejoicing nights[1] and keeping their shops shut on days appointed for general fasts, &c. A deviation also appeared in many from that plainness and simplicity Truth leads all who faithfully follow it into. In a sense of so great defection and the very low state of things which appeared, our minds were

[1] That is, rejoicing on the occasion of military victories.

> closely engaged in a fervent and united labour.[1]

Part of the report from Middlesex is as follows :

> In general the account received was clear and satisfactory in respect to Friends' justness in dealing and punctuality in fulfilling their engagements. . . . . In many Meetings Overseers are not appointed, and we fear Friends are not generally careful when things appear amiss that the rules of our discipline be put in practice. In regard to the militia we find our religious testimony not sufficiently supported, some we fear contributing to the hire of substitutes for that purpose; and too many concur with others in giving public testimony of joy upon the devastations of war and other occasions by illuminating their windows on those called rejoicing nights, as also by keeping their shops shut on occasions of public fasts.[2]

The report of Yorkshire opens in a strain of encouragement, stating among other good features that there was in that county

> a solid, weighty body of Friends . . . . . and many of the youth tender and hopeful, some of whom we believe are under the forming hand of the Lord for service in His Church,

[1] Yearly Meeting Minutes, 1762, pp. 377-378.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 395-396. Public fasts and days of humiliation were appointed when military or naval operations were going against England. Friends refused to participate in them, usually quoting Is. lviii. 1-12.

but immediately after this a sorrowful story of failure is set forth :

> We had cause to fear that divers even of the active members avoid that deep and painful labour this day of ease calls for, whereby, under the divine blessing, discipline and good order might be more generally well maintained to the restoring ancient beauty in the Churches.[1]

The following is a summary of the report presented by the Friends who visited Northampton, Buckingham, Oxford, Hereford, Warwick, Worcester, Gloucester, Bristol, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Wilts and Dorset. They state that they can with satisfaction say " that there were in most places a rightly concerned remnant who mourn for the desolation made in our Zion," but they immediately proceed to speak of meetings on First-days which, though well attended, " are often hurt by a drowsy disposition," and of week-day meetings and those held for transacting the business of the Church being but small. The discipline was lax, women's meetings were held irregularly or not at all, the duties of Overseers and Elders were not fully discharged, Friends were hiring substitutes to serve in the militia and were illuminating their houses on occas ions of public rejoicing.

The committee recommended that certain weak Monthly and Quarterly Meetings should be joined together ; and their work was in considerable measure successful, in recalling the Society to its spiritual duties and privileges although

[1] Yearly Meeting Minutes, pp. 375-376.

it continued to show little power of attracting others to it. Its weakness lay in its lack of sense of proportion, as was shown in its insistence on certain details of conduct, a particular mode of speech and address, for example, as being on a level with its testimonies concerning war or ministry or worship.

In 1776 another committee was appointed to visit Quarterly and Monthly Meetings "for their help and establishment in the Truth."

Turning now to other matters of importance with which the Meeting concerned itself, we may speak of the evolution of the two large volumes *Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, compiled by Joseph Besse and published in 1753. George Fox and other early Friends continually gave advice to Meetings to keep a record of the sufferings endured by their members under persecution. This advice was repeated in 1726 by James Dickinson at a Quarterly Meeting held at York, the Meeting deciding that it should be "offered to the Yearly Meeting at London."[1] This course was also adopted by Quarterly Meetings held in Cumberland and at Lancaster and Kendal. The Yearly Meeting in the following year requested the different counties to collect, digest and forward

> the sufferings of Friends for tithes and on all other accounts, [classifying them] into proper heads, from the beginning of our being a people to this time.

As the voluminous reports came in they were entrusted to Joseph Besse (c.1683-1757), who

[1] *Life*, 1745, p. 168.

had been a writing master at Colchester and he, receiving a small salary, worked upon them in conjunction with a committee. In 1733 one volume was issued and in the following year the printing of volumes two and three was recommended; in 1738 they made their appearance. They comprised the years 1650 to 1666. Two years later there was ready for the press sufficient matter to form four more volumes taking the record up to the year 1689, the year of the Toleration Act; but in 1741, on the recommendation of Joseph Besse it was decided to print no more of the series which had been begun, and to include everything from the beginning in two folio volumes. Twelve years later, in 1753, he produced to the Yearly Meeting the two volumes printed and bound. "And thus, at last, after some thirty years' care and work, this great undertaking disappears from official view, but the value of the work remains to-day, and the two folios are constantly consulted by students of past records especially in the realm of genealogy."[1] The records of sufferings, occupying more than 1300 pages are arranged in chronological order, classified under the different counties, with which are included Bristol, the Isle of Man, and London, followed by New England, the West Indies, America, Malta, the continent of Europe, Ireland, and Scotland. An index of exactly a hundred pages gives the names of about 14,000 men and women, and a preface of more than fifty pages sets forth the various statutes under which Friends suffered or by which they were

[1] For this information concerning Besse's work I am entirely indebted to Norman Penney, who, it is to be hoped, will publish the large quantity of information which he has got together.

relieved. The first sentence, opening with a quotation from the Apocrypha (*Ecclesiasticus*, ii. 5), runs as follows :

> It was an excellent observation of Jesus the son of Sirach that Gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity ; parallel to which is that of the Apostle Paul, All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Those that live otherwise cannot go through it. It is a severe test upon the hypocrite and earthly minded. Such shrink at the apprehension of it, and retire, with Demas, to the embraces of this present world.

As we turn over the minutes year after year, finding them almost entirely occupied with matters of routine and detail of the internal affairs of the Society, we wish that they gave evidence of a wider outlook and of a deeper desire of Friends to serve their generation. It is true that the philanthropic activities of Friends were many, and that they gained a deserved reputation for uprightness in trade and kindness to the poor, but they had little or no concern to enquire into the causes of poverty, war, and other evils and, with one or two exceptions, the Yearly Meeting failed to show interest in the good work that was being done.

One exception is noteworthy. In 1727 and again in 1758 there are recorded minutes urging Friends to have no concern in the Slave Trade, and in 1761 the Meeting, " having reason to apprehend that divers under our name are concerned in this unchristian traffic," decided that in the future those so offending should be

disowned. In 1783 Friends presented to the House of Commons the first petition against this traffic, and on its receipt Lord North in a few words expressed his warm admiration for the Quaker body and his sympathy with their petition, but declared that the trade had become "in some measure necessary to almost every nation in Europe," and that "it would be next to an impossibility to induce them to give it up and renounce it for ever."[1] In one epistle after another, reference was made to this campaign and finally the traffic was abolished in 1807. Friends and others then turned their attention to the abolition of slavery itself in the British dominions, but another thirty years were to pass before the victory was finally won.

The spirit which animated Friends is shown forth in an epistle addressed "To the Inhabitants of Europe on the Iniquity of the Slave Trade," prepared in 1822 by the Meeting for Sufferings, and adopted by the Yearly Meeting of that year. The following passage may be quoted from it:

> It has been alleged by some that the natives of Africa are a race of beings inferior to ourselves. If the intellectual powers of the present inhabitants of Europe are more vigorous than theirs, they should ever consider with thankfulness the means by which they have risen to their state of mental energy. If, in the inscrutable order-

[1] In 1787 there was founded the "Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade," having Granville Sharp for its President. "This society consisted in its origin of only twelve members, most of them being London merchants and the great majority Quakers." LECKY, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, c. xxiii.

> ings of His divine providence, that Being who is all-powerful and all-wise has accelerated the diffusion of moral and religious knowledge through this quarter of the globe, are we not showing our ingratitude for the blessings bestowed upon *us* by acts of cruelty and oppression to *them* ?

The epistle goes on to point out that the negroes are possessed of the common feelings of humanity, " that they are capable of kindness, sensibility and gratitude," " that they can make improvements in the art of agriculture," and can adopt wise regulations for the good order of society. It also deals with the contention that slavery is beneficial in that it makes the slaves " acquainted with the blessings of Christianity."

Another exception was opposition to Capital Punishment. In 1818 the Yearly Meeting " solidly considered the awful subject of the punishment of death, as now practised in this empire," and instructed the Meeting for Sufferings, as its executive body, to address the legislature on the subject.

In the maintenance of the Quaker testimony for Peace we also get some glimpses of the outer world. In the years following the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) there was nothing to call attention to the matter. England, however, broke one of the provisions of the treaty, and Spain exercised with great harshness her right to search English ships ; the nation was lashed into a war fury, and, accordingly, the Yearly Meeting in 1742 remodelled the Eighth Query which, so far, had been

concerned only with tithes. From this time it was to run as follows :

> Do you bear a faithful and Christian testimony against the receiving or paying tithes ? And against bearing arms ? And do you admonish such as are unfaithful therein ?

The invasion of the Young Pretender in 1745 tried Friends more closely, and, when the danger was over, the Yearly Meeting of 1746 presented to the King a loyal address of congratulation on the failure of the rebellion, thanking him for " permitting one of his royal offspring to expose himself to the greatest of dangers for their security." It is not surprising that in this address, savouring more of the courtier than of the Quaker, some have detected a departure from the Quaker testimony for Peace.[1] Since the Toleration Act of 1689 Friends had at intervals expressed their loyalty to the government and their thankfulness for the quietness which they enjoyed ; and this address is in line with others though going further than they had done in the language of adulation. The Meeting for Sufferings of October 1745 had definitely stated that Friends, " consistent with our ancient Christian testimony and known practice," could not be concerned in any movement for providing men, horses, or arms, for repelling the threatened invasion.

> We are conscious of our firm regard and affection to our rightful sovereign King George, and sensible of the obligations we

[1] It begins with the words : " We humbly beg leave to approach thy royal presence."

> are under of fidelity and cheerful submission to his mild and just government, so we trust that our principle against bearing arms is so well known that our not joining in such associations or subscriptions will be attributed to no other cause than a conscientious adherence to our Christian belief and persuasion.

In 1758 the Query concerning the faithfulness of Friends in their testimony against war was detached from number eight and, with additions, was reconstituted as number twelve. About this time Friends were brought into suffering through their refusal to illuminate their windows on nights of rejoicing for military victories. An epistle of "Tender Advice and Caution," put forth by the Morning Meeting of March 1760, states their position. After speaking of the glorious day which had dawned on "our worthy ancestors" in the Society, disclosing to them the truth that war "must be totally eradicated and expelled," the epistle continues:

> And they not only saw that they must cease from outward hostility, but that their conversation and conduct must be consistent and of a piece throughout. As they could not join with others in shedding the blood of their fellow creatures, neither could they be one with them in rejoicing for the advantages obtained by such bloodshed; as they could not fight with the fighters, neither could they triumph with the conquerors; and therefore they were not to be prevailed

> upon to make a shew of conformity by placing lights in any part of the fronts of their houses; but patiently suffered whatever violences and abuses were committed against them.

At times the matter came up before the Yearly Meeting, and in 1789 it was decided that the sufferings of Friends on this account should be recorded and brought to the Meeting.

> It was a season wherein Friends were baptized into a state of much tender feeling one with and for each other, and cordial unanimity of sentiment on the occasion.[1]

On 6th June 1814, a proclamation was issued by the Lord Mayor of London forbidding displays of fireworks in the streets and breaking windows on occasions of public rejoicing, *i.e.* for military victories, such demonstrations being "to the great injury of His Majesty's subjects and particularly to the terror and annoyance of females." The proclamation continues :

> And whereas a number of most respectable persons (of the Society of Quakers), however they rejoice in common with their fellow citizens on the present great and glorious occasion, are not permitted by their religious principles to express their feelings by outward demonstrations of lights [etc.].

Notice is given that all those who are caught offending will be severely punished.[2]

[1] From the manuscript journal of Richard Cockin.

[2] Bevan-Naish Library, Birmingham, vol. *Broadsides*, fol. 145. The occasion was the first treaty of Paris, which "aimed mainly at the construction of a strong barrier to resist further encroachments by France."

In 1778 notice was taken of a clause in the Militia Act recently passed, enacting that in order to prevent people evading service by pretending to be Quakers, all who set up that claim to exemption should bring a certificate signed by two Quaker householders. The minute recommends that application for such certificate should be made to " Elders, Overseers, or other judicious Friends."

It is noteworthy that during the American War of Independence the official correspondence between Friends on each side of the Atlantic was lovingly maintained, and the epistles yearly sent from London make mention of the sufferings of Friends in America

> principally [arising] from that confusion and distress which are inseparable from war, from the laws enacted for promoting military service, and from acts enforcing declarations of allegiance to those in power.[1]

It is good to see an expression of the same love in the epistle from Indiana to London in 1918 :

> We are . . . . thankful for our fellowship in Christ which makes us citizens of the same spiritual kingdom, and even if the United Kingdom and the United States were at war, Friends would still love Friends, and in our mutual prayers for peace and our works of mercy all men would be included.

In 1804, in the course of the Napoleonic wars, the epistle contains an uncompromising statement of the Quaker testimony :

[1] Epistle of 1779.

> Some people, then, must begin to fulfil the evangelical promise and cease to learn war any more. . . . "How reproachfully inconsistent would it be to refuse an active compliance with warlike measures, and at the same time, not to hesitate to enrich ourselves by the commerce and other circumstances dependent on war."[1] Friends, it is an awful thing to stand forth to the nation as the advocates of inviolable peace, and our testimony loses its efficacy in proportion to the want of consistency in any.

In 1811 the following minute was passed:

> It is the judgment of this Meeting that it is inconsistent with our known testimony against war for Friends to be in any manner aiding and assisting in the conveyance of soldiers, their baggage, arms, ammunition or other military stores.

Once more in connection with this subject we note that in 1812, three years before the battle of Waterloo, the world's suffering sent a ripple over the secluded waters of the Yearly Meeting. Part of an address to the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV, runs as follows:

> Seeing that in consequence of the lamented affliction of our beloved sovereign, thy father,[2] thou art called to the high office of administering the regal government of this

[1] This is quoted from the epistle of 1798. The epistle of 1813, alluding to "the continuance and the extension of war," and the "numerous evils which are its inseparable attendants," counsels Friends "in no degree to violate our Christian testimony in this respect for the sake of gain."

[2] This refers to the insanity of George III.

> country, we, his dutiful subjects, the Religious Society of Friends, are desirous of representing to thee a subject in which we believe the welfare of our country is deeply concerned.

The petition is that the prince shall use his royal prerogative to stop the war, and, as on other occasions, Friends express their "grateful sense of the religious privileges we enjoy under the present government."

At intervals notice is taken of a violation of the Quaker testimony for peace on the part of some "who go under our name"—Quaker ship-owners who allowed guns to be carried on their ships in time of war. The delinquents, for the most part, came from North-east Yorkshire and from Kent.

Throughout the period of which we are treating the education of Friends' children claimed the attention of the Meeting. In answer to Queries, reference was made to it, and an epistle of 1737 contains the following clause:

> And Dear Friends, it has become the Concern of this Our Annual Meeting, from the Relation & Hopes given us of Truth's Spreading in foreign Countrys that Friends who are of Abilities & have the Prosperity of Truth at Heart, would in the Education of their Children take care as Suitable Opportunitys & Occasions may offer to let them be Instructed in Some Modern Tongue as French, High & Low Dutch, Danish, &c., that so when they are grown up, They themselves if Traders to foreign Countrys may

> reap the Benefit thereof; and as it shall please the Lord to Dispose & Incline them may be of Service to the Church: And 'tis hoped a proper Master may ere Long be found for that purpose.[1]

Of the condition of education in 1805 Richard Cockin writes:

> The Large Committee's attention was occupied with considering the neglected state of many Children in our Society as to their knowledge of the fundamental Principles of the Christian Religion, on which important subjects much rawness and want of due information too much prevailed. The Committee was brought under considerable exercise on this vitally important subject and were harmoniously engaged to endeavour to apply some remedy to this grevious defection.

The printed epistle of 1805 contained some reference to this subject, and a further result was the issue of a pamphlet *Early Christian Instruction in the Form of a Dialogue between a Mother and a Child*, dated 1807. An epistle dealing with this matter, put forth by the Meeting in 1818, states that "many of the children of Friends are suffered to remain in a state of much ignorance respecting the great truths of the Christian religion," this fact having been made evident by "their too frequent want of almost any instruction when first introduced to our public schools."

[1] This is part of a written epistle, not of "The Epistle" printed and circulated annually.

In 1778 a long minute lays down the constitution of Ackworth School, adopting the scheme brought in by David Barclay from the committee that had been appointed to draw it up.

> It is agreed that the house be opened on the 25th of the 3rd month 1779 for the reception of children of both sexes under the title of
>
> ACKWORTH SCHOOL
>
> in which it is proposed that the principles we profess be diligently inculcated and due care taken to preserve the children from bad habits and immoral conduct.

An adjourned General Meeting of the school was held at the time of Yearly Meeting and, according to the diary of Richard Cockin, the proceedings were for the most part far from being harmonious. It is true that under the year 1789 he records :

> The adjourned General Meeting of Ackworth School was held when much of the wisdom and ability of the reasoning powers of man was prevalent and considerable consideration was shown on the part of those who from their station in the Church claimed more attention and deference.

But a more unhappily characteristic entry appears under the year 1791 :

> It was a very trying painful meeting, so little of a harmonious uniting of sentiment being prevalent therein or a disposition to condescend one to another's views.

The subject of the dispute (or disputes) is not stated.

In 1808 the Meeting agreed to a proposition sent up by Bristol and Somerset Quarterly Meeting for the establishment of Sidcot School and agreed that the Quarterly and other Meetings which were supporting it should not be expected in a collective capacity to contribute to Ackworth. Nevertheless it was stated that if, from "the Western parts," any subscriptions or representatives should be sent to the Ackworth General Meeting, the former would be "kindly received" and the latter would "meet with a cordial reception."

In 1811 a minute records the decision of London Friends to extend over a wider area the benefits of their school in Islington Road. Founded as an almshouse and school in 1702, its service in the former capacity now came to an end, and henceforth it was carried on as a school similar to Ackworth. In 1825 it was removed to Croydon and in 1879 to Saffron Walden.

In 1813 a committee appointed to visit the Quarterly Meeting of Cumberland and Northumberland reported that Friends in that Quarterly Meeting, in answering the Query about the education of children, "appear to retain a view which we suppose is general" that they were to concern themselves only with those children who required poor relief. There were, however, others to be considered and mention was made of a project to establish a school "somewhat on the plan of Ackworth." It was, however, stated that financial help would be required toward the establishment of it. In the following year the committee reported that it was decided to

go forward with the scheme and in 1815 the school was opened at Wigton.

In the following we obtain a glimpse of difficulty which sometimes arose in connection with the attendance of Friends who were not members of the Meeting:

> 1731. 4mo. 11.
>
> This meeting being under some Considerable uneasiness on Account of too many Friends Crouding into the Yearly Meeting for Business, who may not, strictly speaking, be the proper members of the said meeting. 'Tis therefore the full agreement and Conclusion of this meeting, that the same may come under the Consideration of the next Yearly Meeting how the same may be prevented for the Time to come, Immediately after the Clerk is Chosen.
>
> 1732. 3mo. 29.
>
> The minute of last Yearly Meeting which directed the taking into Consideration, whether any Friends should sit in this meeting, but such as are proper members, was fully considered, and it is agreed that the determination thereon be adjourned until the meeting thinks proper.[1]

It is no more than might be expected that we should in these records come upon turns of expression and ways of thought different from those of our own time. The dread, inherited from Puritan ancestors, of any merely super-

[1] Among certain advices put forth, in 1712, by Warwickshire Q.M., occurs the following: "That the representatives of every Meeting see that no disorderly person sit in these meetings of business."

stitious or semi-idolatrous observance of days, which led Friends to keep open their shops on Christmas day, is seen in a reason which is given for changing the holding of Yearly Meeting from Whit-week to a fixed date. Several times had the question been before the Meeting and finally in 1789, on the motion of Bristol, Northamptonshire, Wales and Yorkshire, it was decided to make the change.

> This Meeting being still fully persuaded that the holding of the Yearly Meeting at a movable time is not only attended with divers inconvenience to the Society, but in this case also tends to establish a belief in the minds of many that it is held in commemoration of the day of Pentecost.

It was agreed that for the future the Meeting should be held on the day next succeeding the third First-day in Fifth Month, the Ministers and Elders to meet on the Seventh-day preceding; and two Friends were appointed to take a copy of the minute into the Women's Meeting.

And if at times we are amused or, it may be, irritated at a certain formalism in regard to external observances, nevertheless a testimony to "plainness of speech, behaviour, and apparel" had its service then as it might have now. And if Quaker documents of the time amuse us by their cautions against drunkenness and over-eating at weddings, and on Sundays so that Friends should not be sleepy in the second meeting of the day, we shall recognise the value of them as we see them against the background of the grossness and sensuality of the time. In this

connection we may recall a curious minute that came from the Women's Meeting in 1813:

> This meeting is desirous of again submitting to men Friends a request that the latter part of the Fifth Query relating to excess in drinking and other intemperance may be omitted in the answers from the Quarterly to the Yearly Meeting of Women Friends, apprehending that the advantages resulting from the continuance of it are not equivalent to the trial in which it involves this Meeting; and believing that the care of Quarterly Meetings in relation to these subjects will be rather increased than lessened by the omission.

The Men's Meeting granted the request stipulating that answers to this part of the Query should continue to be sent from the Women's Monthly Meetings to the Quarterly Meetings.

It will not have escaped notice that, as has already been pointed out, throughout the proceedings there ran a certain vein of triviality and lack of vision. From careful diaries kept by two Friends, Richard Cockin, of Doncaster, and James Jenkins, of London,[1] more than from the minutes themselves, we get an impression of discussions, long and unprofitable, on points of

[1] The diaries of Richard Cockin, recording events at Yearly Meeting from 1789 to 1833 (with occasional omissions), are a rich storehouse of contemporary information. Richard Cockin (1753–1845) lived at Doncaster. When approaching eighty years of age he copied his various records into one book, and this volume of 500 closely written pages was presented to the Friends' Reference Library in 1914 by a descendant, the late William Frederick Miller. Richard Cockin appears in the painting of London Yearly Meeting, 1840; see frontispiece.

Of a very different character are *The Records and Recollections of James Jenkins* from 1761 to 1821. James Jenkins (c. 1753-1831), in his manuscript of rather more than one thousand pages, writes freely and candidly of many Friends,and incidentally refers to sittings of the Yearly Meeting.

procedure or the working of the Quaker machine as an end in itself, with but small perception of the fact that, as a Christian society, it had its contribution to make to the country's well-being.[1] Even in our own day we hear the assertion that we ought to be satisfied with setting forth principles while refraining from pointing out the application of them. Except for the Slave Trade and Slavery and Capital Punishment of which mention has been made, the sufferings and the needs of mankind did not occupy the attention of the Meeting; the appalling condition of the labouring classes lately made known to us,[2] the work of Elizabeth Fry and others, were no part of the business of London Yearly Meeting. On the contrary we read of time occupied with a proposal to set apart a committee to visit Meetings of Ministers and Elders, and with a long discussion as to whether any but Ministers and Elders should be appointed to the service. As Richard Cockin describes it:

> . . . Divers Friends expressed their judgment thereon who were directly at variance on the subject—after much time had been spent with discussing whether it would [be] proper to have Friends who were not either Ministers or Elders to visit the Meetings of such Friends or it was not, the

[1] The following illustrates this same condition of things at a later period:
"In a discussion in the Yearly Meeting of 1862 on home mission work, Samuel Bowly said that this topic, relating to the conversion of souls and the carrying the Gospel to the world at large, was one of the first duties of the Christian Church, and he deplored that the Yearly Meeting had often spent much time over matters of such inferior importance. He had known hours occupied with consideration of the size and shape of gravestones, while enormous masses of vice and misery were existing all around."
John Stephenson Rowntree, Account of Yearly Meeting 1862.

[2] In *The Village Labourer* and *The Town Labourer*, by Mr. and Mrs. Hammond.

> business was left just as it was before the discussion took place.[1]

Frequent visits were paid by men to the women's meeting and by women to the men. Long discourses were poured forth but the accounts of them that have been handed down to us do not indicate any high degree of edification. Numerous American visitors took frequent part, even all through the time of the War of Independence, expressing themselves with vigour on one side or other of keenly debated questions. There were frequent Appeals, only twenty-four meetings in our century being free from them. The greatest number in one year was six. The Meeting of 1815 issued a long document codifying or modifying the various rules dealing with the matter which had from time to time been put forth. Sometimes individuals and sometimes Monthly Meetings appealed against a decision of their Quarterly Meeting. The decisions must have often stirred feelings of resentment, but we trust that the following was no isolated specimen of final acquiescence:

> John Roper found that he could now conform and submit to the advice of Friends, that, though when the report of the Committee of Appeals was read, he found the man's part a little stirred, but now found much peace in submitting to the advice of the Church.[2]

The most notable of the Appeals was that of Hannah Barnard, an American Minister, whose

[1] This was in 1793.

[2] Elihu Robinson, Account of Yearly Meeting 1785.

preaching was considered to have a tendency towards unitarianism and a lessening of the authenticity of the Scriptures. Her case took up much time in the Yearly Meetings of 1800 and 1801, and her Appeal against the decision of London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting that she should desist from preaching and return home, was disallowed. She was disowned by her home Meeting.[1]

[1] Second day Morning. The Committee on Appeals brought in their report to the appeal of H. Barnard, she being in waiting. A Friend was desired to request her attendance. She came in accordingly, accompanied by T. Compton's wife; the report was then read, which confirmed the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting of London, etc. That as H. B. held sentiments promoting a disbelief of a great part of the Old Testament, as well as the New, particularly in the miracles and miraculous conception of Christ, she could not, consistent with Friends' principles, be allowed to appear amongst us as a minister, but was desired to desist and return home, etc. She being asked if she was satisfied with the report, answered, "I am not," and desired her appeal might be read, which was accordingly done, after which she entered into a long defence; and no doubt moved the feelings of some, being a stranger amongst us, and she acquitted herself in a very eloquent style, till she had relieved her mind, which concluded the sitting of this Meeting. She gave us to understand she would have something more to offer in the afternoon. Friends seemed willing to show her every indulgence.

Adjourned to 4 o'clock. The respondents were then heard, Joseph Gurney Bevan on their part laboured to show Friends wherein H. B. differed from us, which he did in a very masterly manner, and went fully into her sentiments. H. B. replied to Joseph, and went pretty much over the same ground as she did in the morning and when she had cleared herself and acknowledged she had had a fair and candid hearing, she, with the respondents withdrawing, the appeal with the report was read a second time. It was agreed that the Friends of the Quarterly Meeting of London, etc. should forbear speaking on the subject, also the members of the Morning Meeting, they having judged her case before. After a considerable pause I believe the Meeting came to a very solid judgment that the report of the committee should be confirmed, which was done, and a copy thereof to be sent to the appellant, also one to the Quarterly Meeting, etc. John Abbott and Edward Simkin concluded the Meeting very agreeably in Testimony.

They were two interesting sittings, and it was pleasant to hear representatives from almost every county express their full approbation of the report that was brought in. I don't know that there was one Friend from the the Country who appeared to espouse her cause. George Harrison and two or three more of London would have done it had they been permitted to express their sentiments. A copy of the whole proceedings was ordered to be sent to the Monthly Meeting in America, of which she is a member. .

Extract from a letter from Nathan Robson to Edward Robson of Darlington dated London, 6mo. 2nd, 1801.

Before passing away from our story of the Yearly Meeting we must complete the picture by speaking of its social side, which has never ceased to play its helpful part. It was a time of delightful family and friendly reunion, both in London itself and on the journey to and fro. London Friends who had themselves been spared the expense of travel opened their homes to visitors, and we read of parties of travellers riding on horseback and driving together for several days, expecting to be received on the way into the houses of their friends who, in their turn, were on the watch for them.

> Some account of my journey to London and of my attending the Yearly Meeting in 1791 [By Richard Cockin].
>
> I left home [Doncaster] on first day morning the 6th of 5th Month in the company of William and Martha Smith, John Marriott, Thomas Sanderson, and Thomas Wilkinson. We took Blyth Meeting on our way, which Meeting was to me a rather low laborious season, the quickning influence of the Power of Truth, not being (according to my apprehension) in dominion. We had the company of David Dent after Meeting at the Inn where we dined, and where the enjoyment of social friendship was felt to flow very cordially amongst us. Here we parted with Thomas Wilkinson and reached Newark that evening, where we lodged.
>
> Second day we proceeded pleasantly along, William and Martha Smith was in a single Horse Chaise, and the other

Friends on Horseback; we reached Oakham the second night, and met with a very kind reception from our Friends Robert and Susannah Hawley. On third day morning at Stamford where we stopped to bait, we met with Richard Reynolds and his Wife, whose humble deportment, and kind affable disposition, accompanied with such benevolent liberality, was indeed very cordially grateful to us. On our enquiring what we had to pay for ourselves and Horses, before leaving, we were informed, that everything was paid, our hospitable Friend Richard Reynolds had discharged the whole. We lodged that night at Potton.

On fourth day forenoon we reached Hitchin, where we called upon our antient Friend, Samuel Spavold, who was clothed with love; our visit to him was a remarkable tendring opportunity, it seemed to afford the dear old Friend a peculiar pleasure to see several Friends from Doncaster (where he spent some of his early years) whose appearance he was glad to see . . . We also called upon several other Friends at Hitchin, who appeared to dwell together in unity, so that our visit there was something like a refreshing brook by the way; we reached London about 8 o'clock in the evening.

The following curious account of two sides of the social life at Yearly Meeting time was written by Jonathan Hopkins Bowen, of Gainsborough, in 1825:

Dined at Mildred's Court [the home of

> Joseph and Elizabeth Fry]. The party was gay and extremely volatile, and but for a change of circumstance and scene which we could little anticipate, being there would not have afforded either to myself or my dear cousin J. H. who was with me any tolerable satisfaction. As there were more than the dining room could contain, the surplus (including a youth from Cornwall, myself, my cousin Joseph Hopkins and Thomas Pumphrey) sat down to table in the drawing room. J. J. Gurney came in after this arrangement, and joined this little company, separated, as it might seem in the view of some, by accident, yet others of us chose rather to ascribe it to an over-ruling hand, and J. J. G., sending for Jon^{n} Pim, he afterwards addressed these five individuals successively.

To those who put up at public places of entertainment, the Yearly Meeting issued, in 1731, the following advice and caution:

> It is the care and concern of this meeting to recommend unto all Friends resorting to any of our annual assemblies to be very careful at their inns, or other places where they may lodge, or converse, to be prudent in all manner of behaviour, both in public and private, avoiding all intemperance in eating and drinking, and likewise any foolish jesting or undue liberty whatsoever, that our conversation, seasoned with the fear of God, may appear correspondent to our profession, and answer the witness of God in others.

There has always been a danger that a little coterie of Friends sitting near the table should influence unduly the decisions of the Meeting. This action has probably been more often supposed than real, especially when recorded by one who disagreed with any such decision.

James Jenkins wrote of the Yearly Meeting in 1778 that it

> was held at Gracechurch Street, where was a long table, covered with a great cloth, at which sate "the Lords Temporal and Spiritual," of our Society at that time,

adding, however:

> That Yearly Meeting was to me a mental feast, of which I partook with a keen relish. Isaac Wilson (with a fine clear voice) made an excellent clerk.

In Sixth Month, 1846, John Harrison, of Manchester, wrote to William Hodgson, of Philadelphia (both opponents of "Gurneyism"):

> It was soon manifest to me that everything had been cut and dried by the Table Friends prior to our coming together. George Stacey was clerk, and Robert Forster and John Hodgkin, assistants, with Josiah Forster on one side, backed by Samuel Tuke, James Backhouse and company, and William Forster and Edward Pease on the other, all of whom were much supported by the eloquence of John Pease.[1]

[1] *Selections from the Correspondence of William Hodgson.* Philadelphia, 886, p. 95.

On the other hand Richard Cockin writes very appreciatively of the prominent Friends as "princes of the people."

In all this, recognising, as we must do, the weakness of the time, we are not ungrateful to the men and women who, after all, laid a strong foundation on which we may build. We think of Joseph Gurney Bevan who, with scholarly insight, bore much of the weight of the Society in his time. In one of his works he well sets forth the situation :

> We are, certainly, compared with the millions of our countrymen but few in number ; the world in its pursuit of fame, of wealth and of pleasure takes little account of us, and the tracts which on particular occasions have been published by our authors, either to elucidate our doctrines or to defend them, seldom attract notice enough to be much purchased out of the pale of our own Society. . . . .
>
> We are just considered as a good sort of people in the main who refuse to fight and to swear and to pay tithes; and while the improved manners of the age allow that for these and other singularities we ought not to be molested, the public in general cares little further about us, and seldom enquires a reason of the hope that is in us.[1]

There was no lack of setting forth Quakerism as it was understood; certain Friends

[1] *A Refutation of Some of the More Modern Misrepresentations of the Society of Friends Commonly Called Quakers* (1800) : Introduction and Section iii.

travelled continually in the ministry, public meetings were held,[1] literature was issued; but a certain want of proportion, an insistence on non-essentials, gave to the public an impression of a close, almost monastic body, which did not wish to increase. But even if there was but little perception of great issues, if the causes of poverty were not investigated, Friends gained a deserved reputation for kindness to the poor and to all in distress.

It came to be understood that a Quaker would give, where it was needed, that personal help and sympathy which all our modern wise schemes will not render unnecessary. And even in the face of certain business failures they retained and deserved that reputation for honesty in trade which through suffering they acquired in the earliest days. Officially the Meeting may have taken no notice of the philanthropic concerns of Friends, yet men and women who were brought up under this system founded the first asylum in England, almost the first in the world, where the insane were treated with humanity; they were concerned with prison reform, with elementary education when there was but little of it in England, with the amelioration of the criminal code; sensitive to the call of distress for money and personal exertion. It is a poor spirit that from its elevation jibes at the past—the lower flights of the stairway up which progress has been made.

These ancestors of ours, timid and narrow and limited as we may think them to have been, have handed on to us a character and

[1] See my Introduction to the Handbook of Birmingham Yearly Meeting 1908.

gained for us a reputation which even our age has not yet destroyed; and, grateful to them who *apart from us* will not be made perfect, we face a new and strange world with greater knowledge than they had, and, therefore, with greater boldness to step out into paths that we have not yet known, in our work for the world's healing.

THIRD PERIOD

1825 TO 1918

IT requires some exercise of the historical imagination to picture a sitting of London Yearly Meeting in 1825. We must try to call up a vision of the large meeting-house entirely filled with men—rows upon rows of closely shaven men sitting in their broad, soft hats, with high, collarless coats, ample white neck-handkerchiefs and knee breeches, their clothes not black, but of various shades of grey or drab or brown.[1] Of the Women's Yearly Meeting I will not speak, since that subject is to be treated by another writer—beyond recalling to your memory Charles Lamb's picture of the "troops of the shining ones" who in the May season were to be seen in the neighbourhood of Houndsditch.[2]

[1] There is a painting by Samuel Lucas, of Hitchin, at the Institute, Devonshire House, representing the Yearly Meeting about 1840. Most of the figures are portraits of noteworthy Friends living about that period.

[2] The "troops of the shining ones" (and their men companions) were not always so favourably viewed as by Charles Lamb. In his letters home from Yearly Meeting 1846, Joseph J. Dymond thus describes a Sunday evening journey from Croydon to London:

"We proceeded directly after meeting to the station, where we had to wait a long time before we could get into the train. When we got in, the train would not hold all that were to go. We had, however, good seats in a first class carriage, the other three seats being occupied by a worthy friend, and his wife, and the youngest brother of John Pease as it afterwards proved. We had, however, a scramble for it, and after we were comfort-

It was a time when the stiffness of the old conservatism, bequeathed as a legacy from the eighteenth century, had just begun to be melted by the warmth of the Evangelical revival—a movement which affected the Society of Friends at a later date than most of the other religious bodies in this country. It may have been this in part that produced the quickened interest in the affairs of the Society that preceding years had shown. In 1794 the premises where we still meet had been built, and the Yearly Meeting thrown open to all members who wished to attend it; and Luke Howard reports that within a few years the attendance had increased threefold, and that the speakers no longer "rose with fear and trembling to speak, but as men accustomed to vivacious discussions."[1]

But I find few evidences of any considerable change in the thought or practice of Friends having been wrought by the Evangelical movement prior to about 1830. Clarkson's *Portraiture of Quakerism*, published in 1807, presents the best side of the Society, which was what the author chiefly saw; and it appears before us quite in its old dress—separate from "the world," attentive to religious meetings and discipline, earnestly phil-

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ably seated, we saw two young women friends whose party had got into a carriage and then, the train being full, they were left in the lurch. In my exceeding gallantry, I proposed to young Pease that we should accommodate them by sitting on the elbows of the seats and giving them our places, which we did. . . . After a long time we set off, and after another long space of slow travelling and stoppages we completed the distance (twelve miles) in just one hour and twenty minutes. . . . All the stations we stopped at were crowded with persons, anxious to go, and of course disappointed. Some, however, got on the roofs of the carriages and so were conveyed, but at one station I am satisfied we left behind more than 150 persons, *all crying out upon the 'Quakers,' with whom they said the train was filled.*"

ED.

[1] WILLIAM THISTLETHWAITE, *Four Lectures*, 1865, pp. 139, 140.

anthropic in such matters as the Slave Trade, but with few or no signs of missionary zeal or activity. What he says about Quaker religion is wholly in line with Barclay's *Apology* and other writings of the early Friends.

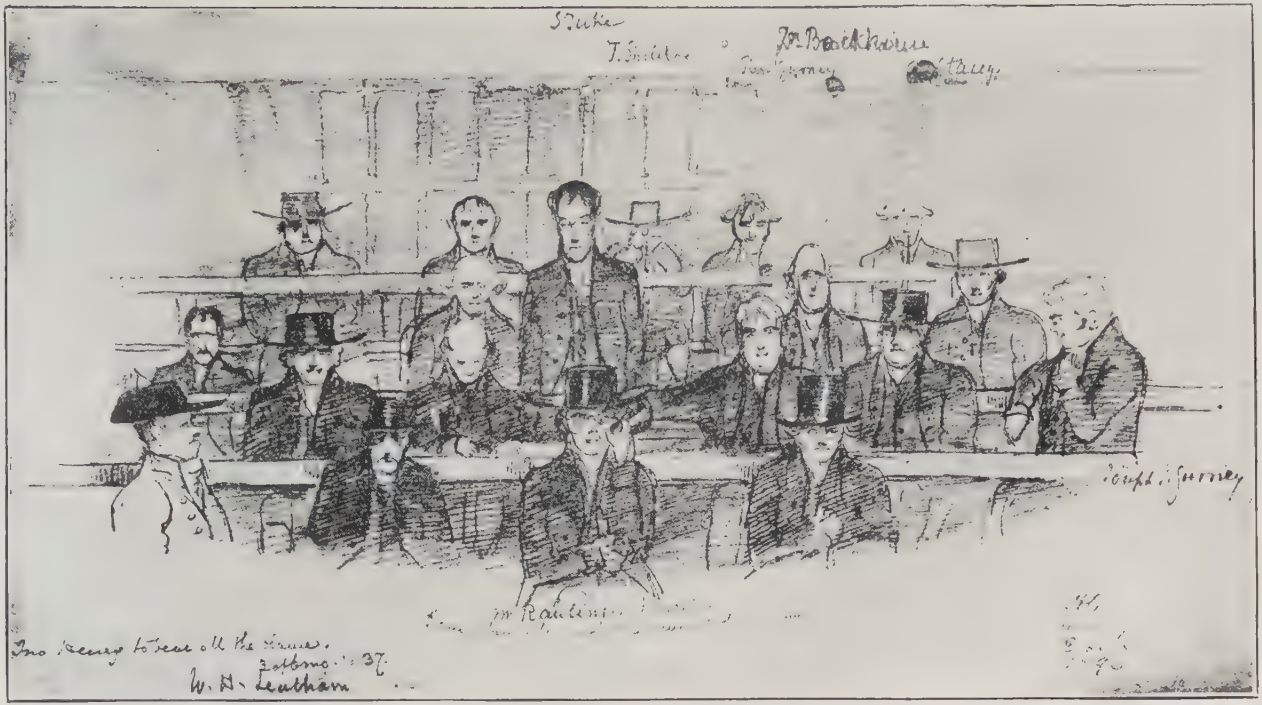
The question of the impact of Evangelicalism, when it was that Evangelicalism first began to influence the Friends of London Yearly Meeting, is an obscure one, and deserves more study than I have yet been able to give it. It is important in relation to subsequent developments—for instance, as regards the genesis of the Hicksite division. It is customary with Friends of the "Hicksite" persuasion in America to attribute their separation from us, not to any new teaching that rose in America, but to Evangelical influences coming from this side of the Atlantic. In their view, it was not Elias Hicks and his friends who had changed, but London Yearly Meeting and those Friends in America who were influenced by travelling Ministers from England. I believe that this theory will not bear examination, and that on the whole the Separation was a chief *cause* rather than an effect of the spread among us of the views specifically known as Evangelical. It drove Friends who were frightened of what was called " infidelity " to seek refuge in outward authority. I have carefully read through most of the Yearly Meeting epistles from 1825 to about 1840 ; and, while all of them in the broader sense may be termed Evangelical, I find little tendency to insist on the doctrines generally called by that name till 1829, when it was thought necessary, in view of the Separation, to define with care the position of the Yearly Meeting in regard especially to the authority of the Scrip-

tures, the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and His sacrifice for sins as the ground of human salvation. After this time, dogmatic statements on the importance of maintaining "sound doctrine," as such, become much more frequent.[1]

Into the Separation itself I do not, of course, enter now; but it is impossible to refrain from expressing regret at the wholly partisan attitude which was taken in regard to it by London Yearly Meeting—owing mainly, I suppose, to the reports received concerning it by English Quaker Ministers who had been in America when it occurred—Thomas Shillitoe and others. An epistle addressed to London by the separated Yearly Meeting of Philadelphia in 1828 was neither read nor even received and acknowledged: a fact which J. J. Gurney mentions with satisfaction in his Journal, adding that "unity and harmony were never more comfortably experienced."[2] Two years later another epistle was addressed to London, but also rejected, asking whether it was consistent "with the precepts of the Christian religion, with the practice of the early Friends, or even with common justice, to condemn your brethren and sisters unheard."

[1] It may, I think, be said with truth that prior to 1829 the inward, or mystical side of Christian life, and its expression in consistency of conduct (often rather narrowly interpreted) was the leading feature of the epistles. The following extract is typical, from the epistle of 1827: "Vital Christianity consisteth not in words but in power; and however important it is that we have a right apprehension of the doctrines of the gospel, this availeth not unless we are regenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost. We therefore tenderly entreat all to wait in humble faith for its quickening influence. . . . It may often be slow in its progress, but it is certain in its effects; and amongst the blessed consequences which it produces, we come to have an establishment in Christ, resulting not from any speculative system of belief, but from a heartfelt acquaintance with His power inwardly revealed to the soul."

[2] This epistle was printed, for the first time in this country, in *The British Friend*, for April 1913, and in the Appendix to my book *Separations*.



LONDON YEARLY MEETING ABOUT 1836

The effects of the Separation on our Yearly Meeting came to a head in 1835, with the publication by Isaac Crewdson, of Manchester, of a small book, *A Beacon to the Society of Friends*, in which, under cover of a rather violent criticism of the doctrines of Elias Hicks, he also attacked the belief in the Light of Christ in the souls of all men, which had originally made the Friends a separate people. It was vigorously replied to by Dr. Thomas Hancock and others, and the Yearly Meeting met that year in considerable excitement, the possibility of a separation here being in many minds. Though no arrangements were then made for reporting the proceedings, and though the taking of notes by members of the Meeting was ruled to be entirely out of order, a lengthy report of the discussions appeared both in 1835 and 1836 in *The Christian Advocate* newspaper, which was virulently on the side of the *Beacon*. It reports that probably a thousand men Friends were in attendance. After what is described as " a stormy debate," a proposition made by Josiah Forster was adopted, that a committee should be appointed to visit Lancashire Quarterly Meeting, and endeavour to heal the breach that had been caused there by the publication of the *Beacon*. This proved no easy appointment. Some of the Friends proposed were objected to by others as partisans, and none wished to serve. The task was a hard and thankless one, and the committee, though it devoted many anxious months to its work, encountered severe criticism at the ensuing Yearly Meeting of 1836, and was generally admitted to have left the situation more embittered than before.

A closely connected subject, which also

roused intense feeling at the Yearly Meeting of 1836, was a proposal from Westmorland Quarterly Meeting that the Society should put out a statement defining "the authority, place and office of the Holy Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice." This was a direct issue between the new Evangelicalism and the old Conservatism, for the "orthodox" view in the Society then was that not the Bible, but the Spirit, is the final "rule."

The discussion led to strange scenes of disorder—no record of which, apart from private letters, would be likely to have come down to us but for the report surreptitiously conveyed to *The Christian Advocate*. Probably the Society in this country was never so near to separation as at that time.[1] The Westmorland proposal was vehemently supported by the "Evangelical" section, and as earnestly condemned by the "orthodox." (How strange it sounds to us now to find these two in opposition!) Many of the latter maintained, with good reason, that the very basis of the Society was being called in question. In the end the Meeting followed the advice of Joseph J. Gurney, who took a middle position and earnestly denied that anything important was at stake. The Society, he believed, had made abundantly clear what its position was in regard to the Bible, and he saw no need for any new declaration. But he hoped the Large Committee would be directed to insert a paragraph on the subject in the general epistle. That was done. The paragraph (which appears on pp. 13 and 14 of our Book of Discipline, Part I) is believed to have been drafted by J. J. Gurney,

[1] See an article of mine "Past and Present: the Yearly Meeting of 1836," in the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* for 1895 (p. 99).

and has been widely held by conservative Friends to have incorrectly stated the position of the Society, and, though doubtless unintentionally, to have committed London Yearly Meeting to a fundamental change in its religious basis. However this may be, its insertion in the epistle is an important landmark in the history of our Yearly Meeting.

The freedom of speech, not always kindly, which Friends used to one another in those stormy days may be illustrated by one or two episodes that occurred in the Yearly Meetings of 1836 and 1837. My grandmother, Sarah (Lynes) Grubb, entered the Men's Yearly Meeting of 1836 under religious concern, and delivered a strong polemic against the " Babel-builders " who were going about to destroy the Society of Friends. Luke Howard, later on, expressed his objection to women Friends taking such means to influence the proceedings of the Men's Meeting, and had no hesitation in saying that much that they had heard was " actuated by a spirit from beneath." The clerk, it is reported, had difficulty in calming the excitement which these remarks occasioned.[1]

In the next year my grandmother, who was seriously ill, addressed a letter to the Yearly Meeting, exhorting it to keep on the old paths, and this was read by the clerk. Luke Howard, who edited a paper called *The Yorkshireman*,

[1] Another instance of plain speaking is recorded by Joseph John Dymond (*aet.* 20) in his report of the 1846 Meeting. An epistle had been sent from the Meeting for Sufferings of Philadelphia to that of London—"it seemed to the minds of most Friends to be written in a sad, un-Christian spirit, and was full of pretty sharp reproof. Its chief cause of complaint seemed to be its disapproval of the writings of some of our Friends. . . . One Friend (a sinister, evil-spirited looking man) got up and proclaimed in a loud voice that he 'thought the writings of Joseph John Gurney were calculated to sap the foundations of Quakerism,'" J. J. G. being present. The clerk reproved the speaker. Ed.

requested that he might have a copy of it. William Allen asked, " with some degree of anxiety," whether Luke Howard desired to have it for purposes of printing. A Friend (who shall be nameless) " was sure the Friend who asked for it wanted it for a bad motive, whatever he might profess to the contrary " !

This is drawn from a report in *The Patriot* newspaper, which was as violently Beaconite in its sympathies and expressions as had been *The Christian Advocate* of the two previous years. It distinguished itself by reporting the proceedings not only of the Yearly Meeting at large, but of the " Select " Meeting of Ministers and Elders, which proceedings were regarded as entirely private and confidential. The chief business at that Meeting in 1837 was the consideration of J. J. Gurney's concern for a lengthy ministerial visit to America. His liberation was objected to by Sarah Grubb, and a large number of other Friends, but supported by relatives of J. J. Gurney and other Friends of influence, and it was with much difficulty that the clerk, William Allen, was able at last to decide that the Meeting was prepared to endorse the concern.

Whether that decision was rightly made or not, it is not my duty to judge. The work of visiting the American Meetings was very arduous, especially for a man accustomed to the comforts of life as J. J. Gurney was, and it occupied three years. While it is certain that many Friends were greatly helped in their spiritual life, it is equally clear that the visit was followed by deep division of feeling among the " orthodox " body in America which led eventually to a new crop of Separations. The subject is a melancholy one, but

there is no possibility of understanding the position of London Yearly Meeting—especially in regard to the matter of its correspondence with other Yearly Meetings—without some study of it. By 1854 Separations had occurred in all the American Yearly Meetings except Philadelphia and North Carolina, between those who followed the old Conservative ways and those who favoured Gurney and Evangelicalism. The most noteworthy of these in their effects on our own Yearly Meeting were the Separations in New England, 1845, and Ohio, 1854.

The Separation in New England was produced by the oppressive and unconstitutional action of the dominant section of that Yearly Meeting in disowning John Wilbur for his opposition to J. J. Gurney. This led to the formation of a "smaller body" (conservative) consisting of followers of Wilbur, and a "larger body" (evangelical) who favoured Gurney. Both addressed epistles to our Yearly Meeting, which in 1846 had to decide between them. There seems to have been no thought of the possibility of remaining impartial. One body must be recognised as part of the Society of Friends, and the other treated as schismatic, and, without much consideration or enquiry into the merits of the case, our Yearly Meeting made the fateful decision to recognise the larger (or Gurney) body. The main reason seems to have been that its epistle was signed by the regular correspondent. It seems, indeed, to have been one of the peculiarities of Gurney Quakerism, which dominated our Yearly Meeting for more than half a century, to refuse to recognise the possibility of any kind of Quakerism different from itself, and to decline discussion of such matters as

" controversial." (That is a noteworthy characteristic, for instance, of the *Memoirs of J. J. Gurney*, written by the late J. B. Braithwaite.)

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, however, did enquire very carefully into the New England Separation ; and a large and influential committee reported adversely to the larger body. This entailed considerable friction between Philadelphia and ourselves—which was gravely increased when, after a disorderly Separation in Ohio, in 1854, Philadelphia recognised the larger (Wilburite) body and we the smaller (Gurneyite). The action of London on this occasion (1855) was not careless or casual, as it appears to have been in 1846. The Epistles Committee was requested to investigate the matter, and was for the occasion thrown open to all (men) Friends ; and it was influentially pointed out that the consequences would be very serious if we cut off a body of some 4,000 Friends in Ohio to whom we were warmly attached. Yet both here, and in the further discussion of the matter in the Meeting at large, the plea of logical consistency prevailed. Because we had recognised the Gurney body in New England we must also recognise the Gurney body in Ohio, though that was much the smaller of the two. Philadelphia, however, as has been already stated, had already recognised the larger body ; and the result was that Philadelphia, to avoid separation within its own borders, found itself compelled to suspend communications with all the other Yearly Meetings, and to remain isolated. That isolation has persisted up to the last year or two, when (to our joy) a more or less regular correspondence between London and Philadelphia has been resumed.

This is the history that lies at the back of the great anomaly of our American correspondence—the anomaly that we recognise, as (in our view) the true Society of Friends, the "Friends' Church," which shows where "Gurneyite" or Evangelical Quakerism may arrive when no longer controlled and steadied by more Conservative influences; while we cut off, and treat as if they were no part of the Society, not alone the Hicksite body, but the separated Conservative Friends in many parts of the United States and Canada. The question at issue in these divisions is far more than a personal one, between the merits of Gurney or Wilbur, and goes much deeper than mere divergence in practice. It is in reality the question whether the principle of the Light Within is recognised or not; and it carries with it the further question, which type of Quakerism, the evangelical or the mystical, really best interprets the root message which has been given to the Society of Friends to declare to the world. Perhaps the answer is that both elements are needed, and that both require to be harmonised and directed by sound knowledge of the Bible and of religious history, if the message is to be truly grasped and worthily delivered.

I propose now to glance at some of the principal other matters that have claimed the attention of our Yearly Meeting since 1825, beginning with such as concern the Society itself as a religious body, and concluding with a brief notice of some of its activities in relation to the world around us.

The practice of printing the minutes and proceedings of the Meeting was begun in 1857; and five years later the annual statistics of mem-

bership, etc., began to be presented. These figures show that the membership of London Yearly Meeting reached its minimum in 1865, when it was 13,773. Since that time there has been on the whole a slow but steady increase, just about keeping pace with that of the general population. The membership at ten-year intervals stood thus:

1865—13,773		
1875—14,197	increase	424
1885—15,386	„	1189
1895—16,407	„	1021
1905—18,332	„	1925
1915—19,962	„	1630

The increase in fifty years was 6,189, or forty-five per cent.; and the period of most rapid growth was during the last few years of the nineteenth and the first of the twentieth century. Since that time there has been a check, and this year's figures show a small actual decrease.

Prior to 1872 a considerable part of the time of Yearly Meeting (and also of its subordinate Meetings) was occupied with the answering of the Queries—a process which was supposed to yield insight into the "state of the Society," and so prepare the way for the discussion of that subject. In practice, the attempt to find a form of words that would truthfully answer such questions as "Are Friends preserved in love?" or "Are you in the practice of private retirement and waiting on God?" was widely felt to be futile and to lead to unreality as well as waste of time. In 1872 the Meeting decided that only two Queries, those that asked about the regular holding and attendance of meetings for worship and discipline, should continue to be answered; and even this was dropped in 1905. In 1881 the method was

adopted of asking for reports from about one-third of the Quarterly Meetings each year concerning their spiritual life and activities. These "Triennial Reports" formed an important feature of the proceedings of Yearly Meeting till 1914, when they also were discontinued.

The "Meeting of Ministers and Elders," or "Select Meeting" as it was often called in conversation, persisted side by side with the open Yearly, Quarterly, and Monthly Meetings until 1876. In 1873 a conference had been appointed to consider the low spiritual condition of the Society. It recommended, among other things, opening the "select meetings" to Overseers and certain other well-concerned Friends. This was considered in 1874 and again in 1875, but not acted upon till 1876, when the proposal was adopted, and the duties of the "Meetings on Ministry and Oversight," as they were henceforth to be called, were carefully defined. These Meetings were held with varying degrees of ineffectiveness until 1906, when it was agreed to discontinue them—the Monthly Meetings being left at liberty to provide for religious oversight and help to the ministry in their different congregations by committees or in other ways. The dropping of the Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Oversight, which preceded the Yearly Meeting at large, gave rise to many complaints of the loss of opportunity for religious fellowship and preparation of spirit; and an endeavour has been made of late years to provide such opportunities in other ways.

The vexed question of Birthright Membership has been more than once considered—the chief occasion being in 1900, when a long minute from

Berks and Oxon Quarterly Meeting, postponed from the previous year, was fully debated. It was proposed that children of members should be entered as Associates, and not admitted to full membership till after application. The Yearly Meeting decided to make no change, but pressed upon its members the need of a sense of responsibility to the Society, and of earnest care for its young people.

About the same period the subject of the Education of the children, both of members and of attenders not in membership, began to receive renewed attention. The Central Education Board had been formed, in 1881, after repeated consideration of the needs of our Boarding Schools; and in 1902 this body was enlarged both in personnel and in function, the name being altered to Central Education Committee. The care of the children and young people of *all* Friends, whether at our Boarding Schools or otherwise, was definitely laid upon it. This was the outcome of a deep concern presented by Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting, in which the late John S. Rowntree was specially interested.

Connected with this subject was that of the Closer Association with the Society of Attenders whether of meetings for worship or of mission meetings.[1] In 1897 this was referred to the Home Mission Committee for investigation and report. The report, presented in 1899, showed that the average annual number of admissions by convincement had risen, during the preceding thirty years, from fifteen to fifty-three, and that in spite of this the number of "Attenders" had

[1] The Evangelical spirit in the Society had led to the starting of many Mission Meetings, or "Gospel" Meetings, especially on Sunday evenings.

increased from 3,000 to nearly 7,500. They recommended an increase in the powers of Preparative Meetings, which should be open to Attenders and should make use of their services. They also desired the wider establishment of mission meetings on Sunday evenings, and, where these meetings had a definite membership, that the members should be more closely linked up with the Society of Friends. These recommendations were adopted by the Yearly Meeting.

Passing now to activities of our Yearly Meeting that concerned the wider world around us, we may glance first at Foreign and Home Missions. The former subject has been dealt with recently by Dr. Henry T. Hodgkin in his book *Friends Beyond Seas*, and I need only mention the abortive efforts made in the thirties, and again about 1861, to get the Yearly Meeting to take up the work. In 1835 Bristol and Somerset Quarterly Meeting proposed the formation of a Friends' Missionary Society—a suggestion which was opposed by a number of the leading Friends, including William Allen, Samuel Gurney, and Josiah Forster. It was decided, after long discussion, that *owing to the want of unity in the Society in regard to doctrine* the time had not come for such a step to be taken; but Friends were encouraged to render such aid as they could to other missionary societies. I think the reason given —divergence on doctrine—points to a deeper cause of the opposition to both foreign and home missions than mere conservatism and inertia, though these were undoubtedly present. There was a real and not wholly unworthy fear of obscuring our real message for

the world by the adoption of methods that seemed like setting up a paid ministry and ignoring the necessity for the fresh " anointing " and guidance of the Spirit in every step of religious work ; and behind this there was the fact that many of those who were most ardently concerned for the development of mission work abroad and at home were believed to hold but faintly, if they did not (like Isaac Crewdson) positively reject, the fundamental principle of the Light Within. Their motto was to make people " Christians first and Quakers (if we like) afterwards "—a principle that would have been wholly unintelligible to the Friends of the seventeenth century. To try to lead people to the essentially Quaker interpretation of Christianity was in the early days the centre and spring of missionary enterprise ; while to the good Evangelicals of the nineteenth century it seemed a small and denominational object, as compared with the aim of preaching salvation by the acceptance of Christ's death for the sins of the world. Hence it is rather misleading to represent the missionary zeal of the later period as exactly in line with that of the earlier.

It is to this deep-lying doctrinal divergence that we must, I believe, attribute in the main the melancholy controversies that marked the consideration of home mission work in our Yearly Meeting. From about 1875 to 1880 a number of " General Meetings " of several days' duration were held in various parts of the country, under the care of a committee of the Yearly Meeting, with the aim of reaching the " unconverted " in the population around ; and the reports of the committee aroused much interest in the Meeting.

In 1882, as the outcome of a joint conference called by the First-day School and Bedford Institute Associations, the Home Mission Committee was set up, to unite Christian workers, give them advice and encouragement, and distribute them as needed. Friends were asked to provide funds for maintenance, without prejudice to our principles of free ministry and spiritual worship. The Meeting was much divided in judgment, and doubts were freely expressed whether the clerk had rightly gathered the real "sense of the Meeting." The committee reported year by year and was continued, but amidst much opposition, and after discussions that were often stormy and painful. In 1893 it was arranged that it should be made more representative of the Society at large, by having the members nominated by the Quarterly Meetings; and this transferred the conflict of views from the Yearly Meeting to the committee itself, which found itself for some years considerably hampered in its work. On the whole, however, the method of making the committee represent the Society as a whole, instead of only the more evangelical section of it, seems to have been fully justified. The committee has more and more won the confidence of Friends, and has increasingly recognised, as an important part of its duties, that of spreading the Quaker interpretation of the Christian life. This change was signalised in 1906, when the name was enlarged to the form "The Home Mission and Extension Committee."

Turning next to matters political, concerning the life of the community and its relations with other peoples of the earth, we find that throughout

the period we are studying our Yearly Meeting was far from taking a purely self-centred view of its duties. In certain fields, at any rate, it has always felt that as representing a Christian body it must strive for the "righteousness" that "exalteth a nation." In 1825 the Slave Trade had already been made illegal, but the agitation for the prohibition of Slavery in the British Colonies was in full swing, and was brought to a successful issue in 1833. From that time onwards efforts to reduce or abolish the evils of Slavery and the Slave Trade in other parts of the world have claimed the attention of the Yearly Meeting, in one form or other, almost every year. So, of course, has the subject of War and Peace, particularly during the years when war has been raging among nominally Christian nations. At such times the Yearly Meeting has rarely failed to put out a statement of the Quaker Peace Testimony. I may mention specially the document of 1841, "The Unlawfulness of all Wars and Fightings under the Gospel"; that of 1854 on the outbreak of the Crimean war; that of 1878, during the war in Eastern Europe, which is one of the most thorough-going of all, claiming that we stand for "peace at any price" as much as for "honesty at any price"; and that of 1900, during the South African war, which anticipates some of the declarations of our "Committee on War and the Social Order," as when it declares:

> We shall not condemn increase in the army and condone the lust of dominion which causes the increase, or denounce war while we worship dividends . . . . . We shall endeavour to be free from all that

would deface manhood and womanhood in industrial conflict or the keen warfare of relentless competition.

The work done by the War Victims' Committee during and after the Franco-German War of 1870-71 is too well known to require more than mention there.

Freedom of conscience throughout the world was another matter that constantly engaged the attention of our Yearly Meeting after 1856.

A "Plea in behalf of Liberty of Conscience," 1856, was translated into nearly all the European languages, and distributed by the hundred thousand throughout Europe. The Drink trade and drinking habits at home, and the Opium trade with China, received very frequent attention. Among other matters that claimed the notice of the Yearly Meeting from time to time I may mention the State Regulation of Vice, Secret Commissions in Trade, and the Settlement in Canada of the Russian Dukhobors.

The Yearly Meeting has again and again felt it to be its duty to approach the governing powers of our own country, and even of other countries, on behalf of righteousness. I have not had time to prepare a complete list of such memorials and petitions, but I find that between 1825 and 1880 at least twenty were sent either to leading Ministers of State or to British Members of Parliament, in addition to about thirteen addresses to the crowned heads or foreign ambassadors of the nations. The subjects of memorials and petitions included such matters as Slavery, Peace, the

Opium Trade, Unsectarian Religious Education, Church and State, Licensing Bills, and the Contagious Diseases Acts; and the addresses to Sovereigns, etc, dealt with the African Slave Trade, the Crimean War, liberty of Conscience and of Worship, the liberation of the Russian Serfs, the death of Prince Albert, and the recovery from serious illness of the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII).

I think that such action clearly shows that our Yearly Meeting has always felt to some extent the force of the maxim attributed to William Penn, that "it is the duty of a Christian to see that his country is well governed," and that it has been far from regarding politics (in the larger sense of the term) as a purely "worldly" matter with which a Christian body had no concern. It is no doubt true that it regarded with uneasiness the entry of Friends into political life, as when Joseph Pease was elected to the House of Commons in 1833, and still more when in the early forties John Bright and Joseph Sturge took up active political agitation on behalf of the repeal of the Corn Laws and the broadening of the Franchise. The paragraph in the epistle of 1843, which contains the words: "We desire ever to be found among those who are 'quiet in the land,'" expresses the widely-felt fear of political (in the sense of party) agitation, but it is far from embodying the best sense of the Yearly Meeting as to the duties of active citizenship, which in later days has found worthier expression. So also is this passage from the epistle of 1846:

> We would affectionately recommend our dear friends to beware of entering the spirit

> of party politics, and when they may think it right to exercise any political franchise which they may possess, to be on their guard that it be done in a temper and manner befitting the consistent Christian.

Not a hint is given that the exercise of the franchise is a *duty* to be discharged for the common good! I may refer, for an example of the larger outlook that has come to us, to the paragraphs on pages 126 and 127 of our revised book of "Christian Practice" (adopted by the Yearly Meeting in 1911), where it is stated:

> Men and women of alertness, intelligence and highprinciple are needed to-day to combat the indifference, ignorance, and self-interest which are continually impeding the wise solution of great national questions.

I will conclude this brief and very imperfect survey with a few sentences designed to bring out the widening vision that, during the last generation especially, has come to our Yearly Meeting, and the drawing together in work for the Kingdom of God of those whose differing thoughts on spiritual things might easily have led them along widely sundered paths.

The great discussion in 1888 of the Richmond Declaration of Faith[1]—when, after a debate in a

[1] A conference of Friends from thirteen Yearly Meetings assembled at Richmond, Indiana, in September 1887, and drew up a Declaration of Christian Doctrine which was submitted to the Yearly Meetings represented. The Friends present from London were Joseph Bevan Braithwaite, Joseph Storrs Fry, Charles Brady, George Gillett, Sarah B. S. Clark, and Maria Richardson.

This conference was the precursor of the Quinquennial Conferences which, in 1902, became the Five Years Meeting of Friends in America.

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densely crowded meeting-house, in which no bitter or hasty word was uttered, the whole Yearly Meeting agreed not to adopt the Declaration—marks the turning point when freedom of religious thought and enquiry was won, and when many who were in whole-hearted devotion to the Quaker way of life, but who could not tie themselves to any rigid formula of belief, found liberty to devote their energies to the service of God in a free religious Society.

The Manchester Conference of 1895, organised by the Home Mission Committee, echoes of which were heard in the Yearly Meeting of 1896, first drew together, in the sense of a common service for the Kingdom of God, many who had felt themselves widely separated in thought.

The Summer Schools for religious study, begun at Scarborough in 1897, proved that freedom of enquiry into the history of the books of the Old and New Testaments, and into the growth of Christian ideas, might go hand in hand with the most earnest and devoted Christian life.

The establishment of Woodbrooke, as a permanent centre for such religious study, and its subsequent close co-operation with institutions like Kingsmead and Westhill, for the training of foreign and home missionaries and Sunday School teachers, brought together our missionaries, our educationists, and our social reformers, and made it clear that the joint efforts of all were needed if the Society of Friends were to receive the needed equipment for its work for the world.

These activities have indeed been carried

on, up to the present time, apart from the Yearly Meeting, which has had no direct responsibility for them; but it is very largely, I am sure, to their indirect influence that we must trace the growing harmony that, during the years of this new century especially, has marked our annual assemblies. In the sense of this ever-increasing unity, so essential if we are ever to be worthy successors of those who carried the Gospel of Light and Truth to distant lands in the seventeenth century, we may surely "thank God and take courage."

THE WOMEN'S YEARLY MEETING

THE history of the Women's Yearly Meeting, with its slow growth and development, is very curious, and is, indeed, rather painful to those of us who may have believed in the theory that women Friends have always had an equal place with their brethren in the Church; but I desire to make it perfectly clear that I am not dealing with the work and service of women Friends in general, but with the much narrower subject of the Women's Yearly Meeting, and to a certain extent of their other meetings for discipline.

We are met at the outset with the difficulty of deciding when the Women's Yearly Meeting can really be considered to have been set up, for, although women Friends seem to have met regularly in London at the time of the Men's Meeting almost from the beginning, and although they wrote epistles to Pennsylvania from quite early days as from the Yearly Meeting of Women Friends, it was not till a century later, in 1784, that the Meeting was recognised as a regular Meeting with representative constitution, and that women were given leave by the Men's Yearly Meeting[1]

[1] Officially the two Meetings were known as "The Yearly Meeting" and "The Women's Yearly Meeting," but the terms "Men's Meeting" and "Women's Meeting," more readily distinguish the two bodies. ED.

to correspond with their own Quarterly Meetings.

This right was confirmed in 1790, but even then the scope of women's duties and powers was very strictly limited by the direction of the Men's Meeting. I well remember the emphatic declaration made by one of our older Ministers—and she a woman of no mean parts—" The Women's Yearly Meeting is not a legislative body "—when she thought the Meeting was going beyond its rights. Towards the end of the century, when women were entering more fully into the work of the world, this position could no longer be tolerated, nor was it, indeed, desired by men or women. But it is clear that from the earliest days of the Society, women's meetings were being held and encouraged all over the country, and not only in England but wherever Friends had carried their good news.

I think probably the germ of both the Men's and the Women's Yearly Meeting is mentioned in the writings of William Crouch under date of about 1660.[1] He tells how, after the taking of the House called Bull and Mouth for a meeting place,

> the Ancient Men Friends about the City did sometimes meet together to consult about and consider of the affairs of Truth and to communicate to each other what the Lord opened in them for the promotion thereof.
>
> And now also [he continues] some Ancient Women Friends did meet together to consider of what appertained to them, as their most immediate care and concern, to inspect the

[1] *Collection of Papers of William Crouch*, 1712, pp. 22-23.

circumstances and conditions of such who were imprisoned upon Truth's account and to provide things needful to supply their wants. And what did or might more immediately concern Men Friends, the Women would acquaint them therewith; and all was done in great love and unity; no jarr or discord amongst them, no repining or murmuring, but a sweet harmony and agreement was preserved in all things. These Women did also enquire into and inspect the wants and necessities of the poor who were convinced of the Truth; and they sate not still until the cry of the poor came to their houses: but where they did suppose or discover a want of help, their charity led them to enquire into their conditions, and to minister to their necessities.

And thus things were carried on with cheerfulness and brotherly kindness in the infancy of the Church. All whisperings and backbitings were shut out, and love and goodwill to all were promoted and cherished. And afterwards as Truth grew and prospered, and many came to be added to the Faith, the Meetings came, through the providence of God, to be settled in that order and method as at this Day.

To "consider of the affairs of Truth," "in great love and unity"—this was to be the basis of all gatherings of Friends, and though we may smile at the quaint wording of the old minutes and documents, I am anxious that while we smile, we should never lose sight of the fact that, whether recognised as "a legislative body" or not, for

all these years these faithful women were holding their meetings, were helping the body at large in quiet ways, and were gaining fresh strength for service as they met together and strengthened each other's hands in the Lord.

George Fox, in his *Journal* and in his letters, makes frequent allusion to the need for women's meetings. In his *Journal*, 1666, he writes :

> And the Lord opened to me what I must do, and how the Men's and Women's Monthly and Quarterly Meetings should be ordered and established in this and in other nations, and that I should write to those where I did not come to do the same.[1]

Even to far distant Jamaica he writes, urging Friends to have a Women's Meeting, though they be but few. In an epistle dated 1669 George Fox writes :

> And now, Friends, so many Monthly Men's Meetings as you have in your county, you may have so many Monthly Women's Meetings ; and if, once a year, at least, you had a General Women's Meeting, it would be well, for in some counties they have as many Quarterly Women's Meetings as Men's, and in others they have only two in the summer time, because the ways are foul and days short in winter.[2]

In these early days of growth and of persecution and of unsettlement, it was soon found that there was much work which could be done far more

[1] *Journal*, Bi-cent. ed., ii. 80.

[2] *Collection of Epistles*, 1698, p. 290.

suitably by women working as helpers with men, and it was for the carrying out of these duties that the women's meetings were established.

Edward Burrough writes in 1662[1] how the Meeting of Women Friends was "to help the prudent ordering of affairs."

> It was seen and considered by us [he continues] that the affaires concerning Truth being grown more large daily, and that it was not so proper for the Men as for the Women to visit the sick and to search out the necessities of the poor, weak, widows and aged, that therefore the Women Friends should keep a like Meeting, at such convenient times and places as they in God's Wisdom should see cause, to be assisting in what was convenient, to the Men especially in that particular of visiting the sick and weak, and looking after the poor, widows and fatherless, and that provision should be made for them how, and after what manner as they in God's wisdom should be taught. And this was the very occasion of the first setting up that Meeting of Women, which since hath continued for the body, and been happy and prosperous in the work for which it was appointed; and is in the same manner ordered in the authority of Christ, to be continued in the service aforesaid.

It is evident however, that there was much opposition. George Fox writes:

> Some that professed truth and had made a great show therein, being gone from the

[1] *Sundry Ancient Epistles* (ms.), p. 28.

> simplicity of the Gospel into jangling, division, and a spirit of separation, endeavoured to discourage Friends (especially the women) from their godly care and watchfulness in the Church over one another in the Truth; opposing their meetings, which in the power of the Lord were set up for that end and service.

To these he addresses a long epistle, in which he uses very plain language:

> Now I say to all of you, that are against Women's Meetings or the Men's and say, "You see no service for the Women's Meetings," and oppose them, you are therein out of the power of God, and His Spirit you live not in.[1]

There is a pamphlet written by George Fox in 1676 which is very illuminating as to the grounds of the opposition raised. Objections must have been rife to gatherings of women, to their disposal of funds, and to their speaking and preaching. It is "An Encouragement to all the Women's Meetings in the World—Who assemble together in the Fear of God for the Service of the Truth. Wherein they may see how the Holy Men Encouraged the Holy Women both in the Time of the Law and in the time of the Gospel; Though Selfish and Unholy Men may seek to Discourage them. But go on in the Name and Power of Christ and prosper."

It contains ninety-six pages and consists largely of exhaustive references, taken from the Bible, to the good and worthy part that women took

[1] *Journal*, vol: ii. pp. 248, 249.

" till Noah's time " and all through the time of the law and the prophets and on to Gospel days.

> Moses said :
>
> " Would to God all the Lord's people were prophets," and surely all the Lord's people are made up of men and women. In the time of the Law there were the assemblies of the women that were wise of heart to help in the work of the Tabernacle, and Moses and Aaron and the seventy Elders did not say to them : " We can do our work ourselves, and you are more fitter to be at home to wash the dishes," or such like expressions. . . . .
>
> And some there have been that would have the women to meet with the men only, and some of them say the women must not speak in the Church, and if they must not speak, what should they meet with them for ? . . .
>
> And now you that stumble at women's meetings, had not your women many vain meetings before they were convinced, and you were not then offended at them, when they met to satisfy the flesh and had junketing meetings to themselves ? and did you reprove them for such meetings ? And why should they not now meet in their conversion in His power and spirit, to do the Lord's business ?

Of Deborah, Fox says : " We do not read that the Elders did reprove her, or bid her hold her prating." He comes to Jephtha's daughter :

> Was not she a virtuous young woman, and

> see what a sermon she preached to her father. . . . And the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephtha, so here they had a yearly Meeting upon this occasion, but the assemblies of the women about the works and services the Lord commanded was beyond this.

He has a word, too, for those " niggards " who, like Judas, carry the bag and are ready to say : " We must have but one purse, and is not our gift and benevolence sufficient ? " Advice is given to the women to rise to their responsibilities, and to do their work " in Righteousness and Godliness and in the Love and Wisdom of God."

Again he records in his *Journal*, 1677 :

> At Reading, there being another meeting about settling a Women's Meeting, some of them that had let in the spirit of division, fell into jangling and were disorderly for a while, till the weight of Truth brought them down.[1]

In spite of all opposition, Women's Monthly and Quarterly Meetings were set up all over the country, and in the Men's Yearly Meeting minutes from 1675 onwards we find frequent concern expressed for the right holding of these.

In 1675 it is desired

> that Friends and Brethren in their respective Counties encourage their faithfull and grave women in the settlement of the said Meetings.

[1] *Journal*, vol. ii. p. 317.

The Women's Yearly Meeting

In 1697 it was proposed and agreed to

> that such faithful Women Friends that have a public Testimony that are in the City at the time of the Yearly Meeting, may have their liberty to sit with the Ministering Brethren at their second day Morning Yearly Meeting for Worship.

Men's and women's meetings for discipline were often held jointly, but the women sometimes preferred to meet by themselves. It is recorded in the minutes of one of the London Monthly Meetings that the Men's Meeting having become very small it would be very much to the benefit and advantage of the Monthly Meeting if women Friends would sit with them as one Monthly Meeting. Women Friends declined to comply with the proposal and "advised men Friends to stir up one another." The men had to give in, and sadly minuted: "It will be the women's fault if this meeting drops." This was in 1727[1].

Up to 1759 the London Quarterly Meeting seems to have been a meeting for discipline only, without a previous meeting for worship, but in that year we find the men inviting the women to join them in a time of religious worship before proceeding to transact the business of the Church. In their reply the women stated that

> ever since Women's Meetings in London were established a time for retirement before they entered upon business has been constantly in use. . . . If this has not been the practice of our brethren it becomes not us to enquire

[1] Beck and Ball, *London Friends' Meetings*, 1869, pp. 319, 320.

> into the cause thereof and we only submit this account of our practice as a reason why we think the alteration cannot avail, at least to our advantage.[1]

In 1753 there arrived a proposition from York for the establishment of a Yearly Meeting of Women Friends,[2] which was endorsed and forwarded to the Men's Meeting. It was hoped that this might be of great advantage and to the furtherance of "needful reformation in our Discipline." It was signed by twenty-eight women Friends, duly considered by the men, and decision deferred till the following year, when the proposition came weightily under the consideration of the Meeting. As a result of their deliberation the advices already given in the years 1675, 1676, 1691, 1707, 1744, 1745 respecting the setting up of women's meetings for discipline were referred to again and earnestly recommended. Copies of these advices were to be sent down and the several counties were ordered to send up to

> this meeting next year a summary account of the state of their respective Women's Meetings both TwoWeeks, Monthly and Quarterly with respect to their present method of Discipline in order for this meeting to communicate such further advice or advices as shall in the wisdom of Truth appear necessary,

[1] Beck and Ball, p. 74.

[2] "At York Quarterly Meeting our Friend William Brown [of Philadelphia] proposed the establishment of a Women's Yearly Meeting, as in Pennsylvania; and after consideration and consulting the women Friends it was agreed to suggest it to the Yearly Meeting of London."—*Life of John Pemberton*, anno 1753.

but, strange to say, there is no mention of establishing a Women's Yearly Meeting. We note that it is to *this* Meeting (that is the Men's Meeting) that the reports are to be sent, not to the Women's Yearly Meeting.

Further advice follows in the next year, 1755. "The great service that Women's Meetings have been to the Society in general and to the youth in particular" is recognised, and, with the

> desire that our Sisters in the Truth, whom Providence hath endued with spiritual gifts, may come up to the help of their Brethren in the Discipline of the Church, it is recommended that each Monthly Meeting of Women Friends depute representatives to attend the service of their Quarterly Meetings who may be furnished with answers to the [seven] Queries proper for the Women Friends,

but there is still no mention of a Women's Yearly Meeting.

Meanwhile, women Friends had been holding their meetings in London for nearly 100 years, but the first Minute Book we find bears date 1759,[1] and as the earliest minutes are very short they shall be quoted in full:

> Yearly Meeting held at Devonshire House, 4th of 6th Month, 1759:

[1] Subsequent research has brought to light the fact that the Minute Book beginning 1759 was the first book exclusively devoted to the minutes of the Women's Yearly Meeting. Minutes of this Meeting for some previous year were written into a book, containing also the Minutes of the Women's Two Weeks Meeting and the Box Meeting. Ed.

London Yearly Meeting

The Epistle from our Women Friends in Pennsylvania was read to the satisfaction of this Meeting, and the following Friends are desired to draw up an answer and bring to our Meeting on 5th day next to be read there, and if approved, signed—viz :—Abiah Darby, Mary Reynolds, Rachel Trafford and Catherine Payton.

At our Women's Yearly Meeting the 7th of the 6th month, 1759:

The Friends appointed to draw up an answer to the Epistle from Pennsylvania brought in one which being read and approved was signed in the said Meeting. The Testimonies of several of our deceased Friends were read to the satisfaction and tendering of many hearts.

That is all; the minutes are not signed, and it is only from another book that we learn that Abiah Darby was clerk of the Meeting this year.[1]

[1] *Abiah Darby* (1716-1794) who signed these minutes was a well-known travelling preacher and she seems to have been a great power in women's meetings. In her diary for this year, 1759, she records : " At Yearly Meeting in London,by request wrote Epistle to the Women Friends in Pennsylvania." Again, in 1761, she says of her own Quarterly Meeting : " I had all the business in the Women's Meetings to transact myself as I generally have, writ the Epistle to the Women's Meeting in London & the Epistle to Wales."

She seems also to have been a very hospitable person. There is a poem by a friend telling of his troublesome journey, which concludes :—

" At length recovered from my fears,
I sought the stately dome,
Where courtesy with kindness cheers,
And strangers find a home.

" Received, refreshed, and edified,
With social Christian grace
Beneath Abiah's roof, I cryed :
Sure heaven is in this place."

These and other interesting details of her life and experience may be read in *The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, vol. x.

There is not much variety in the minutes of these earlier years. Epistles are received from Pennsylvania and from the Dominion of Wales and answered. Testimonies are read "to the sollid satisfaction of the generality of the Meeting." Occasionally there is report of the presence of a visitor and of Friends from different parts of the Nation, where

> the Gospel-rain [it is said] hath been plentifully shed amongst us. May the labours of love bestowed sink deep into each mind present, and be like a nail fastened in a sure place by the Master of Assemblies.

In 1765 it is minuted:

> A proposal being made by some Women Friends in the Meeting of addressing our Women's Quarterly Meetings in this Nation with an epistle requesting them to send up an account of the particular state of their Women's Meetings to our next Annual Assembly, the following Friends are appointed to impart the same to our Men's Yearly Meeting for their concurrence therein [five names] and if the proposal meets with the approbation of our Men Friends the same Women Friends are requested to prepare an epistle to send to the several counties and bring in for the approbation of Friends to-morrow at the 3rd hour in the afternoon in this place, to which hour this meeting adjourns.

At the adjournment the answer from the Men's Meeting was read :

> The following letter from an appointment of our Women's Meeting having been sundry times read and very weightily and solidly considered, the following friends [five names] are desired to acquaint our Women Friends who signed the said letter, that the Meeting is very sensible that the motive of the request made by them proceeds from a desire of affording help where the same may appear needful, but that there doth not seem sufficient time thoroughly to go through the affair this Yearly Meeting, suitable to its importance, and therefore it is recommended weightily to remain on the minds of Friends.

On the receipt of this message the women concluded " to submit the proposal at present, and wait the event of their further consideration next Yearly Meeting."

Having thus " remained weightily on their minds" for a year and being then duly considered, two Friends, Gilbert Thompson and Isaac Sharpless, were deputed in 1766 to bring in the men's conclusions, which seem to have been drawn up by a Committee :

> This Committee having solidly and deliberately considered the proposition received last year from the Women Friends, submit the result to the judgment of this Meeting. It appeareth to this Committee that the Women's Meeting held annually in London

at the time of the Yearly Meeting does not consist of Women Friends regularly deputed from any other Meeting—That the forming such a Meeting has appeared to our Predecessors, as it does to us, a matter of great difficulty.

As therefore the meeting of a number of Women Friends, and of suitable abilities to carry on so weighty and important a work, appears to us very doubtful and uncertain and cannot but subject the few who are qualified to assist in this work to great inconveniency—It is therefore our unanimous opinion that the present is not the proper season for complying with the said proposal.

This was signed by fifty-eight Friends. The Women's minute runs :

> The answer from the Men's Meeting being read, was received with a becoming deference, under an apprehension that the concern will be removed from the Women Friends and rest upon our Men Friends' shoulders.

And on the men Friends' shoulders it seems to have rested for another eighteen years.

Women Friends continued to hold their Meeting and there is still very little variety in the minutes. Attendances appear to have been large. Anna Price (1759-1846) records in an account of the Yearly Meeting of 1776,[1] which,

[1] *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, 1894, p. 194.

as Anna Tregelles, she attended, that "the meeting for business was very full indeed, there seemed scarce sufficient air to breathe in."

One year a call is extended to those who have "in any degree departed from their first love, and who are leaning too much to the vain fashions and customs of the world."

In 1779 seasonable advice against the reading of irreligious books is administered.

In 1781 "the collection" is suddenly minuted.[1] It amounted to £6 19s. 6d. from which 5s. was paid to the doorkeeper, and the surplus was to be divided according to sundry Quarterly Meeting minutes of Ninth and Tenth months 1780.

In 1784 two American Friends, John Pemberton and William Matthews, had been visiting in Lancashire, and were much distressed to find that the epistles written by the Women's Meetings in America were not copied and circulated in this nation, for the women Friends there had thought they were "addressing the Society of our sex at large." This "had so much discouraged their minds as to cause them to apprehend they should be at liberty to drop their salutary correspondence" altogether. The Women's Quarterly Meeting of Lancashire, therefore, addressed the Women's Two-weeks Meeting in London on the subject, and that Meeting forwarded the request for the circulation of the American epistles to the Women's Yearly Meeting. Three other Quarterly

[1] In 1751 eight Friends were appointed by the Women's Two Weeks Meeting "to receive the collection at the ensuing Yearly Meeting." One was to stand "within the door," four "within the meeting," one "in the Chamber," and two "at the outer door"! The plan evidently worked well, as eight years afterwards the same Friends were asked to continue in this service. The money was devoted to poor Friends.
(Minutes of Two Weeks and Box Meetings, 1748–1760.)

Meetings sent the same request. The proposal was duly considered and met with

> the general approbation of this Meeting under a secret hope that the spreading of these weighty epistles may tend to the edifying of the body in love.

Two women Friends were appointed to prepare a few lines to go with the copy of the epistle to the several counties. The meeting further desired that a copy of the said epistle should be sent from the Quarterly Meeting to each Monthly Meeting, and from thence to the Preparative Meetings.

This year it was decided to approach the Men's Meeting once again, and the following minute was drawn up:

> It coming weightily under the consideration of this Meeting the great loss it sustains for want of it being regularly constituted a Meeting for Discipline, the following Friends are desired to lay the concern before our Men Friends now sitting and bring in a report to our next adjournment, viz., Esther Tuke, Elizabeth Gibson, Alice Rigge, Christiana Hustler, Mercy Ransom, Martha Routh, Tabitha Middleton, Susanna Row, and Sarah Corbyn, in which service the company of the women Friends from America will be truly acceptable.

There were four American women Friends in attendance this year—Rebecca Wright, Patience Brayton, Mehetabel Jenkins and Rebecca Jones—and three of them accompanied the

deputation, one being R. Jones.[1] In the *Memorials of Rebecca Jones* we are told that "Alice Rigge pleaded nobly in the Men's Meeting and Martha Routh silenced David Barclay; he surrendered very unwillingly."

At the adjournment the deputation reported that they had laid the matter before the men, "and that the proposal was attended with considerable weight"; that the men Friends desired the women to adjourn till the evening "in order to receive their conclusion."

At the adjournment, four men Friends—Robert Valentine and William Matthews (both of America), Samuel Neale, and William Tuke, brought in the following minute, "which being read was received by many present with thankfulness of heart":

> This Meeting, after a solid and deliberate consideration of the proposition brought in from the Meeting of Women Friends held annually in this City, agrees that the said Meeting be at liberty to correspond in writing with the Quarterly Meetings of Women Friends, to receive accounts from them, and issue such advice as in the wisdom of Truth from time of time may appear necessary and conducive to their mutual edification.
>
> For this purpose, it will be expedient that the said Meeting be a meeting of record, and be denominated "The Yearly Meeting of

[1] The three Americans were Rebecca Jones, Rebecca Wright and Mehetabel Jenkins. These three head the list given in a manuscript in Friends' Reference Library, the others being "Sarah Corbyn, Sarah Rowe (single), Catherine Payton Phillips, Elizabeth Gibson, Esther Tuke, Martha Routh, Alice Riggs, Deborah Townsend, Sarah Crawley." ED.

> Women Friends held in London"; yet such Meeting is not to be so far considered a meeting of discipline as to make rules, nor yet alter the present Queries, without the concurrence of this Meeting.

Samuel Neale records: "We had a good time among them, and left them in sweet peace."

In 1785, therefore, the names of representatives are called over and to them, and others who care to attend, is committed the duty of drawing up the epistle to the Quarterly Meetings. The seven Queries which are appointed by the men for use in Women's Meetings are to be answered at the Women's Yearly Meeting. Two women Friends wait upon the men Friends to know if they have anything further to propose and are informed that they have at present nothing further to communicate. A standing minute is agreed on, which for years after was read before business was proceeded with—"On the importance of our Meetings for Discipline being kept select to our own members." Those who are not members are requested to withdraw, and if representatives or others observe the presence of any such they are to take the necessary care in this respect. This trouble comes up again in the following year (1786), when London and Middlesex is requested to provide suitable doorkeepers to attend to the matter. In the epistle this year the attendance of representatives is commented on with satisfaction, and it is added:

> We trust the dedication of the representatives present will be rewarded with the confirming evidence of true Peace, and others

> encouraged to press through temporary difficulties, to unite with their Friends in an honest labour for rebuilding the walls of our Discipline.

The Meetings are recommended to keep as much as may be to the words of the Queries in their answers. The avoidance of the words "godly conversation" in several of the answers sent in is observed with concern; and there is an appeal to mothers on the upbringing of their children.

Some fifteen or twenty years later there is again advice about the wording of the answers by Quarterly Meetings. They are desired to

> avoid the word "most" when the number of delinquencies does not seem to require it and also to guard against the word "hope" which this Meeting does not consider an answer.

In 1787 two new Queries are suggested, and ten women are appointed to spread the concern of their Meeting before a sitting of men Friends.

In 1791 it is recorded that "some from Dunkirk and one from Germany were present."

Much very curious and interesting light can be gained from contemporary letters.

Joseph Woods writes from Winchmore Hill to William Matthews, of Bath, this year (1787):

> The Women Friends held long Meetings and appeared very willing to be invested with greater power, but it was somewhat limited by the prudence of the Men.

On the other hand, Anna Price writes in 1793:

> The Women's Meeting began at 10 o'clock

THE YARD AT DEVONSHIRE HOUSE

and lasted till between two and three, which was not at all tedious. This was the conclusion of the Women's Meeting. From this Meeting M. Routh and myself were deputed to attend the Men's Meeting to inform them how they had been conducted. This was a fresh trial to me, never having been on such an errand before. Samuel Emlen [of America] spoke very encouragingly on behalf of women Friends as did J. Abbott. We were followed out of meeting by a certain young man, who was fearful we should be too much set up, and convey too much encouragement to Women's Meetings. He spoke to M. R. who was a match for him. I said nothing, but was painfully sensible that the life which was in Christ and may also be in us, was not so in dominion in the Men's Meeting as I thought we had witnessed it. Deep inward wailing and conflict of spirit was much maintained by many through our various meetings, but painful is the jealousy of Men Friends.[1]

When women Friends visited the Men's Meeting they would walk solemnly down their own meeting, cross the yard at Devonshire House and be met by men Elders, who would conduct them to seats in the Ministers' gallery.

Richard Cockin writes in 1789 of a visit from four women Friends, to give an account how their meeting had been conducted, and that the business thereof was about to close :

Our Meeting felt much owned at the time with a solemnizing covering, so that it was

[1] *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, 1894, p. 195.

> a tend'ring, uniting season, under which precious covering the bond of cementing fellowship appeared to be increasingly felt betwixt the two Meetings.

Martha Routh, the M. R. who was a match for the young man as related above, was again a member of the deputation.

At last in 1790 the Men's Meeting having taken into consideration the service of the Women's Meeting, and observing that their minute of 1784 did not sufficiently set forth the proper constitution, drew up a careful minute definitely arranging for its representative character, laying it down, however, that the number of representatives from any Quarterly Meeting was not to exceed the number allowed to the Men's Meeting from the same district.

As we turn over the minute books, matters of more general interest are introduced and considered. An appointment of Elders is made to have an oversight of the conducting of the meetings; women inform the Men's Meeting that they are about to open correspondence with two other American Meetings, "if it meet their approval. A degree of comfortable solemnity hath attended the several sittings."

Joint committees with men Friends are appointed to visit Quarterly Meetings, but apparently men and women are not always "attracted" to the same Quarterly Meetings, and separate appointments are sometimes made.

The temperance question comes up in the Women's Meeting about 1803, and from this time forward it is frequently alluded to. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, it takes a

prominent part in the business of the Meeting. A strong Central Standing Committee on Temperance was formed and reports were read each year.

Reports from our Friends' schools are mentioned about 1820 and there are frequent visits from Ministers who have travelled abroad and who give reports of their visits; and always the answers to Queries and the reading of Testimonies seem to occupy most of the time.

Elizabeth Fry writes in her Journal in 1801:

> After dinner we attended our Women's Meeting at four o'clock, which lasted till nearly eight o'clock; it was to me very long and very tedious.

But she gives a more favourable view in 1830:

> The State of our Society as it appeared in the Yearly Meeting was satisfactory and really very comforting to me, so much less stress laid upon little things, more upon matters of greater importance, so much unity, goodwill, and what I felt, Christian liberty amongst us—love appeared truly to abound, to my real refreshment.

I am impressed, however, with the fact that very little real business was transacted, and I find evidence of this as late as 1847, when ten sessions were held. At the sixth session the only minutes record that the names of the representatives were called over and two Testimonies read. At the

seventh, one minute and one Testimony; at the eighth, three Testimonies.

I must pass rapidly over the following years, in which co-operation between the two Meetings was gradually being extended by interchange of visits, and by the appointment of joint committees and conferences. The first joint session was held in 1880, for the consideration of the Opium Traffic between India and China.

During the latter half of the last century, the Women's Yearly Meeting was very largely attended. The floor of the women's house was often crowded, and it was a formidable duty to the young doorkeeper to keep an eye on every empty place and to conduct Friends to these seats till all were full and every available chair and hassock that could be brought in were occupied. The gallery was also well filled.

In addition to its religious aspect, we younger people looked forward to it as the great social function of the year, and a time of most pleasant fellowship. There was much preaching, and matters of larger and smaller importance were considered. On one occasion a solemn warning was given against an evil custom which was spreading amongst us, and it came as a kind of climax when it transpired that it was " the putting on of the wedding ring " against which we were thus warned.

The reading of Testimonies continued to occupy much time. The answers to the eight Queries from each of the Quarterly Meetings were read in full by a representative, sitting near the clerk's table, and the state of the Society was considered after the reading of the Summary.

It was a tedious business, and I recall the sense

of having our thoughts raised to a higher level which came over us when Sarah Smiley[1] rose, and in her clear voice began with the words: "All these have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" By degrees matters of more interest were introduced and outside meetings, chiefly of a devotional character, were arranged and largely attended.

In mere external matters the changes have been no less marked than in the conduct of the meetings. One would like to know just how those "Antient Women" who attended the meetings in the earliest days looked. About a century later a letter from a girl of seventeen or eighteen says of two Friends whom she visited: "They sit in Meetings without aprons; cloth cloaks without hoods; and black hoods without hats," and she adds: "I think it would be a great cross to me to make that appearance."[2] As I first remember the women's meetings, Friends' bonnets were commonly but not universally worn, and there were few, if any, sitting in the Ministers' gallery who did not wear them. It may probably be quite forgotten that the pegs there were used by the women Ministers who often hung their bonnets up behind them when they rose to speak or when they were too warm. Gradually the importance attached to a particular dress has been discarded for a truer simplicity which sees

[1] Sarah Frances Smiley was from Baltimore, Maryland. She was present at the Yearly Meeting in 1869 and 1870. She was greatly appreciated by the Evangelical section of the Quaker community, and her earnest addresses and appeals made a great impression. Her visit to the north of Scotland, including the Orkney and Shetland Islands, is specially note-worthy. In 1872 she resigned her membership, and was publicly baptized at a Baptist church in Brooklyn (of which there is a long account in *The Manchester Friend*, 1872), and married a Baptist Minister. ED.

[2] *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, 1894, p. 193.

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no virtue in any special form of clothing, and the days are passed of which Charles Lamb could write:

> When they come up in bands to their Whitsuntide conferences, whitening the easterly streets of the Metropolis from all parts of the United Kingdom, they show like troops of the shining ones.[1]

Gone too is the awe of the upper seats of the meeting-house, and I often rejoice to see with what easy freedom the young Friends of to-day take these places in a way we of the older generations would not have dared to do. In those earlier days very few young people ever took vocal part in the meetings for discipline, and we rejoice still more to see them now take their share in all the business.

As years went on, various alterations were made in the conduct of the Meeting, with a view of making it more useful and profitable.

In 1881 a committee was appointed to arrange that, each year, some subject of special interest to women Friends should be introduced and considered in one of the sessions of the Women's Yearly Meeting.

In 1900 the special subject, introduced by three Friends, was, "The Position of Women during the Nineteenth Century." The following minute, briefly summarising the lines of the consideration, may be quoted as a contrast to earlier minutes to which reference has been made:

> As we have had brought before us in these papers the position in which we stand to-day,

[1] *Essays of Elia*—"A Quakers' Meeting."

> we have desired that we may realise the dignity and responsibility of womanhood and learn in what ways we must go forward. We need to uphold in our lives a high standard of purity, holiness and beauty, and not to shrink from taking our part in public works, and in the wide questions in which we can help humanity. As our opportunities for service have so largely increased, may we strive to keep pace with the times and be willing to fill the place we ought to fill of increased usefulness in the Church and in the world around, as the Lord Himself may direct us.

In 1884 Bristol and Somerset sent up a minute that they were of opinion that some change was desirable in the constitution of the Yearly Meeting in order that women should have a larger share and influence in the work of the Society. Two suggestions were made :

> 1st. That women Friends should be eligible as members of the Meeting for Sufferings, and
>
> 2nd. That the clerks of the Men's and Women's Yearly Meetings should confer as to what subjects should be brought before women Friends for their consideration and approval.

Nothing seems to have come of the first of these suggestions,and it was not till 1895, when the same Quarterly Meeting sent up another more far-reaching minute that the matter was carried forward.

A large joint committee was appointed, which went carefully into the whole question. This

committee recommended to the Yearly Meeting of 1896

> that in future Women Friends be recognised as forming a constituent part of our Meetings for Church affairs equally with their brethren, and that they should be eligible for appointment as members of the Meeting for Sufferings.

These proposals were agreed to, and from this time all the meetings, except two, were held as joint sessions. Women Friends continued to hold two separate sessions in which their own Temperance report, and the Missionary Helpers' Union report, were read. The special subject was arranged for one session, and the State of the Society considered, and their women's epistle brought in.

It was however more and more felt that the position was not satisfactory, and ten years later the complete fusion of the two Meetings was finally decided on and accomplished. From 1908 all the sessions of the Yearly Meeting have been held jointly.

Thus, in 1907, the Women's Yearly Meeting as a separate body came to an end. It was naturally with some regret that an institution of so many years standing was laid down. The closing minute reads :

> We bring our Yearly Meeting to a close with mingled feelings. We have been reminded of the attitude of the Apostle Paul

when he says: "Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

We remember with devout thankfulness the years that are past during which, as a Women's Yearly Meeting, we have proved our Father's love and faithfulness. We feel He is leading us on and we go forward under the conviction that His power and love will be over us, as it has been over the dear Friends of past generations, as we rely in simple faith on the work of our Lord Jesus Christ and His life imparted to us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In reverent thankfulness for all the mercy and grace which has been granted us, we encourage one another to be "strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might" as each new duty comes before us; then assuredly He will be able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, for His own glory.

ELIZABETH BARCLAY BACKHOUSE,
Clerk.

I venture to assert that the result has amply justified the change that has been made.

And may we not now thankfully conclude with words of George Fox from the pamphlet from which I have already quoted:

> And so, now, the end of all Men's and Women's Meetings in the time of the

Gospel (the power of Christ being the authority of them) is that they might all labour in His power, and in His grace, and in His spirit, and in His light, to do His service and His business in Truth and Righteousness.

ADDENDA

THE CLERKSHIP OF THE YEARLY MEETING

THE office of clerk of London Yearly Meeting has been filled by eighty-two Friends, all men.[1] The position is somewhat equivalent to that of president in other religious bodies,[2] but freedom of speech and absence of voting in meetings for Church affairs place great responsibility upon the Friend whose duty it is to decide what is "the sense of the Meeting."

From the first Yearly Meeting to 1703 the Recording Clerk (or general secretary) of the Society acted as recorder of decisions. In 1704 we find this minute:

> The Meeting considering that it is necessary that this meeting should have a Clerk belonging to it of the nomination of this meeting, doth now nominate John Field to be the Clerk of this meeting for this year, and doth agree that for the future the Yearly Meeting shall every year Nominate and Choose the

[1] For a short time, during the Yearly Meeting of 1918, Mary Jane Godlee acted as clerk.

[2] "There is no one presides among them after the manner of the assemblies of other people, Christ only being their President."—PENN, *Rise and Progress of the Quakers*, 1694, chap. iv.

Clerk for that year, according as they shall see occasion.

In 1706 the following important decision was made and recorded :

> Pursuant to the Agreement of the Yearly Meeting in the year 1704, this meeting doth now Nominate and Choose John Field to be Clerk of this meeting for this year and doth now agree that from henceforward, no one Person shall serve in that place two years successively ; and that no new choice of a new Clerk for the future shall be deemed or taken to be a Reflection upon the former Clerk.

As time passed, however, the method of choosing a new clerk from the entire membership present proved long and cumbersome ; hence, in 1733, a committee was appointed to consider a method which might " prevent debates. " The following records the decision :

> The Committee appointed to Consider of proper Methods as with respect to the Choice of a Clerk, have made their Report to this Meeting, which was here read and agreed to and ordered to be hereafter Incerted and that a Copy of this minute together with the said report be sent down to the Countys for Friends' Information therein.
>
> " The Committee appointed to Consider of proper methods for the annual choice of a person Proper to be Clerk of the Yearly Meeting having met and taken the matter into their serious Consideration do agree,

That in order to prevent debates in the Yearly Meeting respecting the Choice of a Clerk, it is convenient to have the several Meetings that are members of this Yearly Meeting Divided into five Districts : as follows viz :

North

Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, Cheshire, Scotland.

South

London, Middlesex, Surrey, Sussex, Kent, Hampshire, Berkshire.

East

Essex, Colchester, Suffolk, Norfolk, Norwich, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Ely, Huntingtonshire.

West

Cornwall, Devonshire, Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, Bristol, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, North Wales, South Wales, Worcestershire.

Midland

Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Rutland, Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Bucks, Bedfordshire, Hartfordshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire.

" And that a Clerk be annually Chosen by one of the said districts in the Course and order in which they do now stand.

"And that as the Clerk for the present year [John Moore] is of the Northern district; so next year One be chosen by Friends of the Southern, and the year following by the East, and the next succeeding year by the West, and the year after that by the Midland District, and so on in a Continual Rotation, untill the same shall be altered by the Yearly Meeting.

"And in order that the Election of a Clerk as aforesaid may be made in a Convenient manner, we think it will be proper, that the meetings Composing the District on whom the Election for that year doth fall, be first called over, and the names of the Representatives of such meetings be first Entered, and that they then Immediately Retire into the Chamber in order to a nomination of a proper Person to propose to the Meeting for their Approbation as a Clerk for that Year."

This annual change of clerk satisfied the Meeting for many years—no clerk from 1707 to 1807 having retained his position for two consecutive years—but in 1805 an alteration was suggested:

Sixth day morning, 31 of Fifth Month 1805.

The following proposition from the Committee on Epistles was brought in and read viz:—

"This Committee proposes to the Yearly meeting to consider if some better mode than the present of choosing its Clerk, may not be adopted which proposition is referred to the next Yearly Meeting."

1806. 5 mo. 30.

The Minute of the last Yearly Meeting respecting a better mode of choosing it Clerk is deferred for the consideration of the next Yearly Meeting.

1807. 5 mo. 26.

On consideration of the minute of the last Yearly Meeting respecting a better mode of choosing a Clerk, it is now agreed that all the *representatives* shall meet at the close of the first sitting of the Meeting in each year, and shall when so met nominate *from among themselves* a clerk for the current year. And it is further agreed, that the representatives shall also nominate, *from among the members* of this Meeting at large, two friends to be *assistants* to the Clerk.

This decision opened the way for the re-appointment from year to year, as found desirable, of the same clerk. The manner of appointment has varied in recent times.

The eighty-two Friends who have acted as servants to the Yearly Meeting have been drawn from all ranks of the Society—educational, industrial, financial, professional, literary, as well as from the leisured classes, and they form a body of men of whom any Church might be proud. A list of these Friends is given later, but a few words about some of them may here appear.

The most prominent Friend who acted as clerk prior to 1807 was Dr. John Fothergill (1712-1780), who found time amid the pressing claims of a

popular London physician to serve the Society thrice in this way as well as in many other capacities. James Jenkins remarks on his clerkship of 1779:

> He was an excellent clerk; what he said and wrote was, indeed, *multum in parvo*. I never knew any man (Lord Mansfield excepted) who expressed so much meaning in so few words.[1]

John Fry (1701-1795), of Wiltshire, was three times clerk—the Friend whose work among the minutes of the Yearly Meeting led to the preparation and publication of the first "Book of Extracts" and who also wrote and published prose and verse.

Joseph Wyeth (c. 1663-1730), of London, a writer of some note, was clerk four times, and Thomas Beavan (-1735), of Melksham, who may be remembered by his controversy with the vicar of that town, acted on five occasions. Alexander Arscott (c. 1677-1737), schoolmaster and writer, of Bristol, was four times clerk.

John Gurney (1715-1770), of Norwich, was grandfather of J. J. Gurney and Elizabeth Fry. He served as clerk at five quinquennial periods beginning in 1745.

Perhaps the most picturesque figure was Samuel Bownas (1676-1753), a Friend who lived and worked in both the early and middle periods of Quakerism. He was a blacksmith and an able Minister and has left valuable records of his experiences. It is said that when he was chosen clerk to the Meeting of 1741, he disapproved of the choice, thinking himself unqualified. "If,"

[1] *Records of James Jenkins.*

he remarked, "I am a good *parson*, I am but a poor *clerk*, as Friends will find."

From 1707 to 1807 forty-eight Friends held the office for one year only; from 1780 to 1807, a period of twenty-eight years, the Yearly Meeting had twenty-seven different clerks. No wonder that the need of continuity became apparent by the last mentioned year.

Of the sixteen clerks since 1807 little need be recorded here. John Wilkinson (d. 1846), of High Wycombe, seven times clerk, was a prominent Minister. He joined Friends by convincement, and resigned his membership in 1836. Joseph Storrs Fry (1826-1913) held the clerkship for the longest period—1870 to 1875 and, on the death of his first successor, George S. Gibson, 1881 to 1889—fifteen years.

CLERKS OF THE YEARLY MEETING

1	John Field	1704-06
2	Daniel Wharley	1707
3	Joseph Wyeth	1708
	John Field	1709
	Daniel Wharley	1710
4	John Freame	1711
5	Joseph Heale	1712
6	Charles Harford	1713
	Daniel Wharley	1714
7	Thomas Beavan	1715
	Joseph Wyeth	1716
	Thomas Beavan	1717
8	John Wilson (Cumberland)	1718
	Thomas Beavan	1719
	Joseph Wyeth	1720
9	John Gopsill	1721

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10	Alexander Arscott	1722
	Thomas Beavan	1723
	Joseph Wyeth	1724
	Alexander Arscott	1725
11	John Wilson (Kendal)	1726
	Thomas Beavan	1727
	Alexander Arscott	1728
	John Wilson	1729
12	John Moore	1730
13	William Williamson	1731
14	Edmund Gurney	1732
	John Moore	1733
15	Daniel Vandewall	1734
	Edmund Gurney	1735
	Alexander Arscott	1736
16	Henry Bradford	1737
	John Wilson	1738
17	John Hayward	1739
18	Edmund Peckover	1740
19	Samuel Bownas	1741
20	Joseph Huntley	1742
	John Wilson	1743
21	Jacob Hagen	1744
22	John Gurney	1745
23	John Fry	1746
	Henry Bradford	1747
24	Gilbert Thompson	1748
25	John Fothergill	1749
	John Gurney	1750
	John Fry	1751
26	William Fowler	1752
27	William Dilworth	1753
28	Jeremiah Waring	1754
	John Gurney	1755
	John Fry	1756
29	John Freeth	1757

Addenda

	Gilbert Thompson	1758
	Jeremiah Waring	1759
	John Gurney	1760
30	William Fry	1761
31	Edward Gulson	1762
32	Isaac Wilson	1763
	John Fothergill	1764
	John Gurney	1765
	William Fry	1766
33	Thomas Squire	1767
34	John Hustler	1768
	Jeremiah Waring	1769
35	Henry Gurney	1770
	William Fry	1771
36	Joshua Strangman	1772
	William Dilworth	1773
37	Jacob Hagen	1774
38	Joseph Docwra	1775
39	Thomas Rutter	1776
40	Sampson Lloyd, Jr.	1777
	Isaac Wilson	1778
	John Fothergill	1779
41	William Bleckley	1780
42	Robert Davis	1781
	Sampson Lloyd	1782
43	William Tuke	1783
44	Richard Chester	1784
45	Thomas Bland	1785
46	Richard Reynolds	1786
47	Joseph Storrs	1787
48	William Jepson	1788
49	John Eliot	1789
50	William Grover	1790
51	Philip Debell Tuckett	1791
52	Thomas Huntley	1792
53	George Braithwaite	1793

Addenda

54	Joseph Gurney Bevan	1794
55	Lawrence Candler	1795
56	Robert Fowler	1796
57	Joseph Gibbins	1797
58	Joseph Birkbeck	1798
59	George Stacey	1799
60	William Alexander	1800
61	William Rawes, Jr.	1801
	Joseph Gibbins	1802
62	Robert Barnard	1803
63	John Merryweather	1804
64	Joseph Gurney	1805
65	Arnee Frank	1806
66	James Baker	1807
67	John Wilkinson	1808-14
68	William Dilworth Crewdson	1815-19
69	Josiah Forster	1820-31
70	Samuel Tuke	1832-37
71	George Stacey	1838-49
72	John Hodgkin	1850-51
73	Joseph Thorp	1852-61
74	Edward Backhouse	1862-63
75	Joseph Crosfield	1864-69
76	Joseph Storrs Fry	1870-75
77	George Stacey Gibson	1876-80
	Joseph Storrs Fry	1881-89
78	Caleb Rickman Kemp	1890-98
79	John Morland	1899-03
80	Henry Lloyd Wilson	1904-10
81	Henry Brady Priestman	1911-12
82	John Henry Barlow	1913-

Addenda

THE CLERKSHIP OF THE WOMEN'S YEARLY MEETING

It is interesting to note the difference between the Men's and Women's Yearly Meetings in the matter of the clerkship. Whereas the men changed their clerk annually during the hundred years, 1707 to 1807, the women retained Elizabeth Talwin in office for twenty-one years (1765 to 1785); whereas the men filled pages of their minute books with directions as to the mode of choosing a clerk, the women did not even trouble to minute the name of the clerk in office, until the year at the end of which E. Talwin resigned the clerkship, when we read:

> Mary Fairbanks and Deborah Braithwaite are requested to assist Elizabeth Talwin in the clerkship of this Meeting.

From 1788 the nomination was made by a committee of representatives.

Many of the names in the list which follows are those borne by well known Friends, the printed records of whose lives have come down to our times, about whom therefore nothing need here be said. But of Elizabeth Talwin, who heads the consecutive list, and who served the Meeting for so long a period, a short account may be given.

Elizabeth Talwin (1727–1795) was a daughter of John and Mary Ashby, of Worcester. In 1754 she married, *s. p.*, Joseph Talwin, of Ratcliff, near London, and on her removal, she at once became a useful and active member of her new

Meeting. The minutes of the Women's Monthly Meeting of Ratcliff (which are extant from 1755) bear abundant evidence of this for forty years, during thirty of which she appears to have been clerk of the Meeting. She was an Overseer and Elder, and was one of the first women appointed to sit on the committee of the Friends' Workhouse, Clerkenwell. A comparison of handwriting in the minute books of the Women's Yearly Meeting, Ratcliff Monthly Meeting and its finance committee, and the Two Weeks and Box Meetings shows the close association that Elizabeth Talwin had with the work of these bodies of women Friends.

CLERKS OF THE WOMEN'S YEARLY MEETING

Abiah Darby	1759
Elizabeth Talwin	1765–85
Sarah Grubb	1786–87
Patience Chester	1788–94
Sarah Hustler	1795–00
Phebe Lucas	1801–03
Phebe (Lucas) Allen	1804–05
Sarah Hack	1806
Phebe Allen	1807
Sarah Hack	1808
Phebe Allen	1809
Hannah Fisher	1810
Ann Lucas	1811–12
Elizabeth Zachary	1813
Ann Lucas	1814–15
Elizabeth Dudley	1816–17
Ann Lucas	1818
Anna Braithwaite	1819

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Ann Lucas	1820
Anna Braithwaite	1821–23
Ann Lucas	1824
Mary Fox	1825
Elizabeth Dudley	1826–34
Katherine Backhouse	1835–37
Isabella Lister	1838
Katherine Backhouse	1839–40
Maria (Samuel) Fox	1841–43
Eliza Hack	1844–45
Esther Seebohm	1846
Mary Tanner	1847–48
Katherine Backhouse	1849–52
Sarah Robson	1853
Katherine Backhouse	1854
Esther Seebohm	1855–56
Katherine Backhouse	1857–58
Sophia Alexander	1859–63
Eliza Barclay	1864
Sophia Alexander	1865
Eliza Barclay	1866–69
Hannah Brady Sewell	1870–71
Sarah Eliza Dymond	1872–78
Lucy Walker	1879–80
Anna Rebecca Whiting	1881–82
Catharine Wilson	1883–84
Maria Richardson	1885–90
Jane Eliza Brayshaw	1891–98
Mary Jane Godlee	1899–01
Elizabeth Barclay Backhouse	1902
Mary Jane Godlee	1903
Elizabeth Barclay Backhouse	1904
Mary Sturge Whiting	1905
Elizabeth Barclay Backhouse	1906–07

Addenda

RECORDING CLERKS

1	Ellis Hookes	abt.	1657-1681	24
2	Richard Richardson		1681-2-1689	7
3	Benjamin Bealing		1689-1737	48
4	Benjamin Bourne		1737-1746	9
5	Joseph Besse		1746-1748	2
	Benjamin Bourne (cont.)		1748-1757	9
6	Jacob Post		1757-1757	1
7	Robert Bell		1757-1759	2
8	William Weston		1759-1773	14
9	Thomas Gould		1773-1783	10
10	John Ady		1783-1811	28
11	William Manley		1811-1844	33
12	James Bowden		1844-1857	13
13	Charles Hoyland		1858-1890	32
14	Isaac Sharp		1890-1917	27
15	William F. Nicholson		1917-	

THE EPISTLE FROM THE YEARLY MEETING

Whilst theoretically it was left to the decision of each Yearly Meeting whether or no an epistle should be issued—the formula ran for many years " we conclude to issue an epistle " —on no occasion during the period under review from the year 1675 has there been any omission in the issue of the annual letter.

The earliest epistles addressed to Friends in the North, and later to Friends throughout the country, embodied urgent requests for money wherewith to carry forward the work of Friends

beyond seas as well as at home. From the General Meeting held at Skipton in April 1660, the last for the whole country held out of London (till modern times), an appeal was sent out for funds for " the great work and service of the Lord beyond the seas in severall parts and regions," signed by twenty Friends. Another epistle emanated from the Yearly Meeting of 1666, and then comes the Yearly Meeting from which we count our unbroken succession—1668-9—the epistle being dated 16th of 11 mo. 1668-9. Epistles followed in 1671, 1672, 1673, 1675, 1676, 1677 ; and in the years 1678-1680 we have records of " Yearly Meeting Papers " sent down, consisting of minutes passed, with epistolary introduction and close.

From 1681 to the present, annual epistles have been issued—two hundred and thirty-eight in number. From 1682 to 1691 addenda by George Fox were sent down, his letter to Friends to accompany the 1691 epistle, " written with his own hand, and left sealed up," was opened and read after his death. In 1692 an epistle signed by Stephen Crisp and George Whitehead was subjoined. In 1677, 1678, 1680, 1681, Ellis Hookes, recording clerk, signed the epistles " on behalf of the meeting " ; from 1682 to 1688, they were signed by Richard Richardson ; and from 1689 to 1721—for thirty-three successive years—by Benjamin Bealing ; Richardson and Bealing being successors to Hookes in the recording clerkship. Henceforth the signatures of the Yearly Meeting clerks were appended.

The epistles down to 1681 were sent out without the aid of the press ; the epistle of 1682 began the printed series.

Addenda

On three occasions epistles to date have been reprinted in their entirety—1675 to 1759 in 1760; 1681 to 1817 in 1818; and 1681 to 1857, in two volumes with historical introduction in 1858.[1] There have been complete reprints also in America, *e.g.* at Baltimore in 1806. Extracts by John Fry, from epistles 1682 to 1762 were printed under about one hundred headings, in 1762, and reprinted in 1766. *Devotional and Doctrinal Extracts* from the epistles, 1678 to 1810, were made by Thomas Foster, of Bromley, and printed in 1811 with various criticisms. The *Extracts* are dedicated "To the Real Lovers of the Scripture Truth in the Society of Friends." *A Selection from the Christian Advices issued by the Yearly Meeting*, prepared by the Meeting for Sufferings in 1813, contained portions of numerous epistles, and passed through some six editions.

In the second half of the eighteenth century the epistles appeared frequently in the secular press—*Scots Magazine*, *London Chronicle*, *Lloyds Evening Post*, *Gentleman's Magazine*, *Universal Magazine*, etc., and many at various periods have been reprinted in Ireland and America.

The epistle of 1829 was, by some person unknown, reprinted in London in gold ink on white paper, and on dark blue paper in silver ink with gold ink margin.

> E'en the Yearly Epistle, its humble garb scorning,
> Now sparkles in silver, or blazes in gold.
> (*Select Misc.*, ii. 226.)

[1] James Bowden, recording clerk, prepared the Historical Introduction, by request of the Library and Printing Committee, February 1857.

Epistles have from time to time been translated into German, French, Chinese, Welsh, Norwegian. The issue of 1916 was reprinted in English in China. In 1712, 1200 copies were printed; in 1759, 8,000; in 1792, 12,000, all in folio. The regular series of "book epistles" began in 1864. The largest number printed in this form was, apparently, in 1917—21,000.

A study of the whole range of these annual reports and admonitions would doubtless be interesting and instructive as indicative of the inner mind of the Society. We can here refer briefly to some only of the main subjects introduced.

From 1682 to 1702 reference was frequent to Friends in captivity in the Barbary States and appeals were made for money wherewith to redeem them. Occasional biographical details were given. For many years (1700-1853) statements of amount of pecuniary sufferings appeared, the total for London and Dublin Yearly Meetings for the century and a half being the large sum of £1,160,488. The heaviest amount reported in one year was £16,200—in 1814 (£1,100 "arose from military demands and the remainder from the support of our testimony against tithes and other ecclesiastical claims"). During the period in which the amounts were reported separately (1734 to 1800), the lowest for London was £2,669 in 1763, and the lowest for Dublin was £603 in 1800.

Prisoners are reported from 1690 to 1835. In 1694, one hundred and thirty-two Friends were in prison. In 1696 ninety-seven were discharged. The numbers diminished to one in 1728 and none

in the next two years, and then the numbers remained among the units till 1814 and 1815, when ten Friends each year were reported to be in gaol for their "testimony against war." In 1759 we have the record of the death in prison, after a short inprisonment for non-payment of tithes, of a Friend, aged ninety-seven years—Daniel Hollis, of the Isle of Wight.

The need for diligence in attendance at weekday meetings is emphasised in thirty-three epistles from 1688 to 1846. "The iniquitous practice of dealing in negroes and other slaves" is mentioned in 1758 and there are numerous references to the slave trade between 1772 and 1844. The subject of temperance comes frequently to the fore; there are also many exhortations to the young.

For many years matters of interest which received attention at the Meeting were reported for the information of Friends generally, but with the close of the nineteenth century such allusions disappeared, and subsequent epistles took the form of religious addresses.

Except in the case of the Barbary captives, few names of Friends are introduced; there is not any reference to the death of George Fox in 1691, though the following is a mention of his *Journal* in 1694:

> An account is given to this meeting of our dear and ancient brother, George Fox's Journal being printed and to be disposed of, by his executors, according to his will; in particular, one to every Yearly and Quarterly Meeting of faithful Friends throughout the world.

Addenda

It is strange that so little is known of any results following the distribution of the many thousand epistles put forth.

THE EPISTLE FROM THE WOMEN'S YEARLY MEETING

From a volume of manuscripts belonging to the Box Meeting, it is clear that as early as 1672 official correspondence took place between the "Womens Meeting of London" and women Friends of Barbados, and ere the close of the century there was a systematic exchange of epistles between the same London Meeting and the Yearly Meeting of Women Friends of Philadelphia. 1757 is the first year the Epistle is stated to have been issued from "the Yearly Meeting of Women Friends held in London," and it was not until 1768 that it was signed by one Friend as clerk. Previously it had been the custom for many of those present at the meeting to sign. In 1672 seventeen signatures are appended, with the note:

> From our meeting Generally, which being 150 at least so too tedious to trouble you with all our names.

When Elizabeth Talwin signed the epistle for the first time, in 1768, she explains the unusual procedure by the following:

> The meeting was so far spent 'twas thought proper to omit signing it in the usual manner by a large number of Friends.

There is ample evidence that women Friends did their own secretarial work and did not hand it over to a paid official as did the men.

At the end of "The Register of Epistles," under date 1778, occurs this note:

> The Recorder of these Valuable Epistles resigns the Pleasing Office with Regret, being obliged to leave London, as she has reap'd much solid satisfaction by the Imprinting on her mind by writing, the many Excellent Remarks and wholsom Council contained in them.

This was Mercy Crafton, born 1748.

The following is from the minutes of 1779:

> Hannah Plumsted, Jun., is requested to enter the Epistles into the Epistle Book and in future to keep that Record in the room of Mercy Crafton who is removed from London.

Willing helpers were forthcoming labouriously to copy by hand the epistles for transmission abroad and to the home Quarterly Meetings. These Friends may have found how woefully easy it is to make mistakes in copying, for a post-script is appended to the epistle of 1785 asking

> that great attention may be paid to copying the epistles correctly, that the sense of them may not be lost.

This labour of love continued until 1823, when the epistles were lithographed. From 1855 onwards they were printed.

Addenda

CHRONOLOGY

1658 (May). General Meeting at John Crook's, in Bedfordshire.
1659 (April). General Meeting of Ministers in London.
1660 (April). General Meeting of Ministers at Warmsworth, near Doncaster.
1660 (April). General Meeting of Men Friends at Skipton.
1661 (May). General Meeting in London.
1666 General Meeting of Ministers.
1668 (April). General Meeting of Ministers.
1668–9 (Christmas). Meeting of Ministers.
1670–72 Attended by Ministers only.
1672 Extant Minutes begin.
1673 Attended by Representatives.
Morning Meeting established.
Yearly Meeting Reference Library founded.
1674–77 Attended by Ministers only.
1675 Meeting for Sufferings constituted.
1678 Attended henceforth by Representatives.
1681–1918 Epistles issued yearly.
1681 Circular Yearly Meeting for Wales approved.
1682 First printed Epistle.
1687 Address of thanks to William III. on Liberty of Conscience.
1690 George Fox's last attendance.
1692 Queries settled.
1692–1722 Affirmation Controversy.
1693–94 "Declaration of Christian Doctrine" adopted in connection with the George Keith Controversy.
1694 Yearly Meeting for Bristol allowed.

Addenda

1698 Circular Yearly Meeting for Four Northern Counties approved.

1699 Circular Yearly Meetings to be for Worship only.

1702 Address to Queen Anne on the Act of Toleration.

1704 First Clerk appointed by the Meeting.

1708 Address to Queen Anne on the Union of England and Scotland.

1710 Address to Queen Anne on Toleration.

1713 Address to Queen Anne on the Treaty of Utrecht.

1716 Address to George I. on the Jacobite Conspiracy.

1720 Circular Yearly Meeting for Seven Western Counties allowed.

1727 First appointment of Elders.

1727–53 Preparation of "A Collection of Sufferings," by Joseph Besse.

1733 Decision to appoint Clerks from five districts in rotation.

1737 Membership defined—Rules for Removals and Settlements.

1738 Manuscript "Book of Extracts" prepared.

1746 Address of congratulation to George II. on the Rebellion.

1753 Proposal from Yorkshire for the establishment of a Women's Yearly Meeting not accepted.

1755 Meeting of Ministers and Elders established.

1760ff. Revival of the Discipline—general visitation of Meetings.

1763 Address to George III. on the restoration of peace.

1767 Request for the establishment of a Women's Yearly Meeting refused.

Addenda

1772 John Woolman in attendance.
1774 Appeal from Thomas Crowley, of London, resulting in his disownment.
1779 Establishment of Ackworth School.
1783 " Extracts from the Minutes and Advices " published. (Appendix in 1792.)
1784 Women's representative Yearly Meeting set up.
1787 Circular Yearly Meeting for Seven Western Counties discontinued.
1789 Circular Yearly Meeting for Four Northern Counties discontinued.
1791 Advices and Queries settled.
1794 First meetings in new meeting-houses.
1798 Yearly Meeting for Bristol discontinued.
1800 Address to George III. on the attempt on his life.
1801 Hannah Barnard Appeal and Controversy.
1802 "Extracts from the Minutes and Advices," second edition. (Supplement in 1822.)
1807 One-year Clerks discontinued.
1812 Address on the War.
1814 Appeal of Thomas Foster of Bromley, resulting in his disownment.
Largest amount of pecuniary sufferings reported, viz. £16,200.
1815 Rules for Appeals revised.
1820 Rules respecting Removals and Settlements revised.
1822 " An Address to the Inhabitants of Europe on the Iniquity of the Slave Trade " issued.
1829 " Declaratory Minute" on the Scriptures.
1833 Petition to both Houses of Parliament for the abolition of Tithes, signed by

six hundred and seventy-eight men Friends present.

1834 Petition to both Houses of Parliament for the abolition of Tithes, signed by eight hundred and eleven men Friends present.

"Rules of Discipline" issued. (Supplement in 1849.)

1835 The "Beacon" Controversy.

Proposed formation of a Friends' Missionary Society defeated.

1837 New rules as to registration of births, burials and marriages, consequent upon national registration.

1840 "A Testimony to the Authority of Christ in His Church" issued.

1841 "The Unlawfulness of all Wars and Fightings under the Gospel" issued.

1845 Alteration in the Queries.

1851 Census of attendances on 30th of Third Month—total, 20,814.

1856 "A Plea in Behalf of Liberty of Conscience" issued.

1857 "Extracts from Minutes and Proceedings" first printed.

1861 Revision of Advices and Queries.

"Doctrine, Practice and Discipline" published.

Visitors from Calcutta present.[1]

1862 First Tabular Statement presented.

[1] "This visit always seems to me to be one of the most moving and dramatic incidents in the history of our Society. I often think of those two Indian Friends, kept all the morning outside closed doors, after their long and arduous journey to England, while the Society debated on the technical question of their admittance to Yearly Meeting; of the chilling reception they received—allowed to be present, but not to speak: of the disillusionment they must have suffered . . . ."

Henry T. Hodgkin, *The Call of India to the Society of Friends*, 1919. See *The Friend* (Lond.), 1861; *Friends Beyond Seas*, 1916; and MSS. in Reference Library.

Addenda

1863 Address to the Prince of Wales on his marriage.

1865 Minimum of membership—13,773—since annual publication of returns. See 1916.

1872 Only two Queries to be answered.

1873 Returns of distraints discontinued.

1875 Advices and Queries revised.
Committee on General Meetings first appointed.

1876 Meeting on Ministry and Oversight set up.

1878 " An Appeal to our Fellow Christians on War " issued.

1881 Triennial Reports instituted.
Central Education Board established.

1882 Establishment of Home Mission Committee.

1883 " Book of Christian Discipline " issued.
Committee on General Meetings discharged.

1888 Richmond (Ind.) Declaration of Faith not approved.

1894 Map of area of the Yearly Meeting presented and approved.

1895 Manchester Conference on Home Missions.

1896 Darlington Conference on Foreign Missions.
Women become a part of the Yearly Meeting.

1897 Pemba Mission established.
Minutes of Women's Meeting first printed in " Proceedings."

1899 Associateship established.
Powers of Preparative Meetings enlarged.

1900 " Christianity and War " issued.

Addenda

1900 Important discussion on Birthright Membership.

1901 Central Education Committee established.
Morning Meeting laid down.

1903 York Conference on Recording of Ministers.

1904 Census of attendances on four First-days in Tenth Month—total average, 34,463.

1905 Meeting in Leeds.
Answers to Queries discontinued.

1906 " Christian Discipline," Part III., revised.
Ministry and Oversight Meeting laid down.

1907 Women's Yearly Meeting succeeded by Women's Conference.

1908 Meeting in Birmingham.

1909 Census of attendances on four First-days in Tenth Month—total average, 31,981.

1911 " Christian Discipline," Part II., revised.

1912 Meeting in Manchester.

1914 Triennial Reports suspended.
Census of attendances on four First-days in Tenth Month—total average, 24,174.

1916 Adjournment in First Month.
Conference on War and the Social Order.
Maximum of membership—20,059—since issue of Tabular Returns. See 1865.

1917 " Christian Discipline," Part III., revised.

1918 First woman Friend as Clerk (for portion of time only).

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